NATION

Probe into smoke at Kozhikode hospital underway: Vijayan

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AP inks Rs 10K cr deal to build AI-powered city

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SPORTS

Pant struggles as PBKS face LSG

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DIGITAL ENGLISH DAILY, BENGALURU

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India bans Pak imports as war looms

India suspends all postal services with Pak; bans entry of Pakistani ships into Indian ports

Amid escalating tensions with Pakistan following the Pahalgam terror attack, the Indian Navy shared a image featuring INS Kolkata, a Dhruv ALH helicopter, and a Scorpene-class submarine, calling it the 'trident of Naval Power – above, below and across the waves' ***PHOTO: X/@INDIANNAVY***

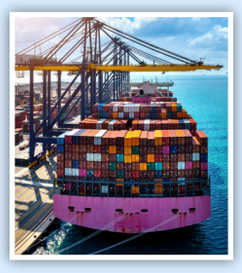
INDIA, PAKISTAN TRADE IN NUMBERS

Financial Year	Exports (India to Pakistan)	Imports (Pakistan to India)
2021–22	$513.82M	$2.54M
2022–23	$627.1M	$20.11M
2023–24	$1.18B	$2.88M
2024–25	$447.65M	$0.42M

TOP EXPORTS FROM INDIA TO PAK

Organic chemicals	$129.55M
Pharmaceutical products	$110.06M
Sugar & Confectionery	$85.16M
Auto components	$28.57M
Petroleum products	$11.63M
Fertiliser	$6.00M

(Apr–Jan 2024–25)



SOURCE: TRADE MINISTRY DATA, 2025

NEW DELHI, 3 MAY

India has imposed a complete ban on all imports from Pakistan, both direct and indirect, citing national security and public policy concerns following the Pahalgam terror attack on April 22, which killed 26 tourists.

A new provision under the Foreign Trade Policy (FTP) 2023 prohibits the import or transit of goods originating in or exported from Pakistan until further notice. The Directorate General of Foreign Trade (DGFT) stated that exceptions to this ban will require specific government approval.

Key imports from Pakistan during April–January 2024–25 included fruits and nuts (USD 0.08 million), certain oilseeds and medicinal plants (USD 0.26 million), and organic chemicals. However, bilateral trade had already dwindled following the 2019 Pulwama attack, when India raised import duties to 200 per cent and revoked Pakistan's Most Favoured Nation (MFN) status under WTO provisions.

India has also suspended all postal services with Pakistan and banned the entry of Pakistani-flagged ships at Indian ports. Indian ships have been barred from docking at Pakistani ports as well.

These moves follow a series of retaliatory steps after the Pahalgam attack, including the shutdown of the Attari land transit post, expulsion of Pakistani military attachés, and suspension of the Indus Waters Treaty of 1960.

Tensions escalated further as Pakistan test-fired its Abdali surface-to-surface ballistic missile on Saturday. Although prior notification was given under international norms, Indian officials called the launch a "blatant act of provocation".

Sources also reported increased Pakistani military activity in the Arabian Sea, naval warnings, and ceasefire violations along the LoC. In a high-level meeting, Prime Minister Narendra Modi granted the armed forces "complete operational freedom" to determine the response.

Meanwhile, Pakistan has responded by suspending trade, closing airspace to Indian aircraft, and rejecting India's actions regarding the Indus treaty. It warned that any attempt to cut off water would be treated as an "act of war". *—PTI*

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Before Pahalgam, intel agencies had flagged potential attack

NEW DELHI/ SRINAGAR, 3 MAY

Intelligence agencies had flagged potential terror threats to tourists in the outskirts of Srinagar days before the Pahalgam attack that claimed 26 lives on April 22, officials confirmed on Saturday.

The warning led to intensified security in areas like Dachigam and Nishat, with senior police officers supervising combing operations. The alert followed an October 2024 attack in Gangangir, Sonamarg, where seven people, including a doctor, were killed.

Despite a two-week search, no suspects were found, and operations were called off on the same day as the Pahalgam incident. Officials revealed that two local terrorists had mingled with tourists before herding them to a food court, where two Pakistani operatives opened fire.

There were concerns that the attack was timed to coincide with Prime Minister Narendra Modi's scheduled visit to inaugurate the Katra–Srinagar rail link. Though postponed due to weather, officials believe Pakistan-backed elements sought to overshadow the high-profile event.

The recovered advanced weaponry, including M-series rifles and armour-piercing bullets, suggests a shift in terrorist tactics. Authorities urged caution in viewing tourism as a sign of normalcy, recalling similar assumptions before a 2006 attack on tourists. *—PTI*

After Modi, Rajnath to skip Russia's Victory Day too

NEW DELHI, 3 MAY

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh is set to skip Russia's Victory Day parade and his deputy Sanjay Seth is likely to represent India at the event in Moscow this week, official sources said on Saturday. The move to send the Minister of State for Defence to the 9 May ceremony comes amid increasing tensions between India and Pakistan over the Pahalgam terror attack. Russia had invited Prime Minister Narendra Modi for the Victory Day parade to mark the 80th anniversary of the Soviet victory over Germany in the Second World War, but it was decided that Singh would attend the event. The sources said Seth will represent India at the parade. The Russian president is expected to visit India for the annual BRICS summit this year. *—PTI*

NEET probe: NMC cancels admission of 14 students

NEW DELHI, 3 MAY

In a significant crackdown on malpractice, the National Medical Commission (NMC) has annulled the admissions of 14 students and suspended 26 MBBS students linked to the NEET-UG 2024 fraud. The National Testing Agency identified instances of unfair practices during the exam, leading to the disqualification of 42 candidates for three years and an additional nine candidates for subsequent sessions. An investigation by the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) is ongoing, with the status of 215 candidates under review. The NMC has reiterated its "zero-tolerance" stance on academic misconduct, urging medical colleges to swiftly implement these directives. This move comes just ahead of the NEET-UG 2025, set for May 4, as the NMC seeks to maintain integrity in medical admissions. *—PTI*

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6 dead and 70 injured after stampede at Goa temple festival

Rescue operation underway after a stampede broke out during a temple festival in North Goa on Saturday ***PHOTO: PTI***

PANAJI, 3 MAY

At least six people, including two women, were killed, and more than 70 sustained injuries after a stampede broke out during a temple festival at a village in North Goa in the wee hours of Saturday, officials said.

Chief Minister Pramod Sawant has announced an inquiry into the incident that occurred around 3am at Sree Lairai Devi temple in Shirgao village, about 40 km from Panaji where a stampede broke out as thousands of devotees thronged the narrow lanes to the temple for the annual festival.

"At least 30,000 to 40,000 people from Goa, Maharashtra and Karnataka had gathered for the festival, and some were standing on a slope. Around 20-50 persons fell on the slope, causing others to tumble on each other," a police official said.

Chief Minister Pramod Sawant visited the injured at the North Goa district hospital and the stampede site.

- "At least 30,000 to 40,000 people from Goa, Maharashtra and Karnataka had gathered for the festival, and some were standing on a slope," a police official said.

Talking to reporters at the site, Sawant said, "I have asked for a detailed inquiry into the incident. We will make the report public." He said precautions would be taken for all temple festivals in the state to prevent such incidents. State Health Minister Vishwajit Rane said approximately 80 people sustained injuries, with 13 currently admitted at the Goa Medical College and Hospital (GMC), of which five are critical and on ventilator support, while the remaining are in the specially created emergency ward. *—PTI*

>>>More on Page 3

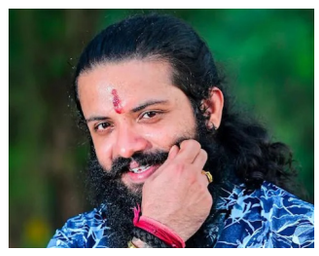
8 held in M'luru Hindu activist's murder

MANGALURU, 3 MAY

Home Minister G Parameshwara on Saturday announced the arrest of eight individuals in connection with the murder of Hindu activist Suhas Shetty in Mangaluru and said a permanent anti-communal task force would be set up to curb incidents of communal hatred.

The arrested are Abdul Safwan, 29; Niyaz, 28, Mohammed Muzammil, 32; Kalandar Shafi, 31; Mohammed Rizwan, 28; and Aadil Mehroof — all from Bajpe, and Ranjith, 19; and Nagaraj, 20, from Kalasa in Chikkamagaluru.

City Police Commissioner Anupam Agrawal said Safwan, the prime accused, had a previous attempted murder case and was allegedly attacked by Suhas Shetty in 2023. Fearing further attacks, Safwan is believed to have plotted Shetty's murder. He reportedly approached Aadil Mehroof, brother of slain youth Fazil, and was promised Rs 5 lakh, of which Rs 3 lakh was paid in advance. Safwan then assembled a team to carry out the killing.



Suhas Shetty, a known rowdy sheeter, was murdered late Thursday in the Bajpe area.

Parameshwara said a permanent anti-communal task force, modelled after the anti-Naxal unit, will be established in Udupi and Dakshina Kannada, headed by an IGP. He said the force will help restore peace in regions marred by communal tensions. The Minister warned that action would be taken against anyone — including public representatives — making inflammatory statements. "We will not rest until the communal network is completely dismantled," he added. *—PTI*

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Lawyer found dead with injuries on NICE Road

BENGALURU, 3 MAY

A 46-year-old advocate, Jagadish, was found murdered on the NICE Road near Kengeri, on the outskirts of Bengaluru. The incident occurred on Friday between 7. 30 pm and 8pm as Jagadish was driving home to SMV Layout in his Kia Seltos.

Reports indicate that unknown assailants rammed his vehicle near the CV Raman Estate stretch. When. Jagadish exited his car to assess the damage, the attackers, who were lying in wait, launched a sudden assault with lethal weapons. Despite attempting to flee, he was chased down for 150m and bludgeoned to death.

Police inspecting the scene discovered multiple severe cut injuries on the body, including a deep head wound with exposed brain matter, as well as slashes to his abdomen and leg, suggesting the use of heavy, sharp weapons. His mobile phone was also missing.

The victim's relative, Prabhanjan, was alerted around 10.30 pm. He located. Jagadish's abandoned car with its lights on but found the advocate's body a short distance away. Prabhanjan has filed a formal complaint alleging a deliberate act to force Jagadish out of his vehicle before the murder. The Kengeri police have registered a case and initiated a manhunt to apprehend the perpetrators. *—Salar News*

USE A MAP OF INDIA AND ANGOLA

PM announces $200M for modernisation of Angolan army

New Delhi: Prime Minister Narendra Modi with Angolan President Joao Manuel Goncalves Lourenco before their meeting, at the Hyderabad House,

NEW DELHI, 3 MAY

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday announced a USD 200 million (Rs 20 crore) defence credit line for Angola and expressed commitment to act firmly and decisively against terrorists and their backers, an assertion that came days after the Pahalgam terror strike.

Modi made the remarks after holding wide-ranging talks with Angolan President Joao Manuel Goncalves Laurenco that focused on ramping up overall bilateral ties, including in areas of digital public infrastructure.

In his media statement, the prime minister said Laurenco's visit to India not only gives a new direction to the bilateral relations but also strengthens the India-Africa partnership.

Modi also said that there was a discussion on repair, overhaul and supply of defence platforms as well.

India will also share its capabilities with Angola in the areas of digital public infrastructure, space technology and capacity building, Modi said. "We have also decided to further strengthen our relations in areas of healthcare, diamond processing, fertiliser and critical minerals."

The prime minister also said, "We are committed to taking firm and decisive action against terrorists and those who support them."

Highlighting the importance of ties between India and the African Union, he said, "We are partners in progress, We are pillars of the Global South."

Laurenco arrived in Delhi on Thursday on a four-day trip. *—PTI*

INDIA-ANGOLA RELATION

- India supported the Angolan freedom struggle against Portuguese colonial rule until it gained independence in 1975.
- Angola joined India's Non-Aligned Movement in 1976.
- India is one of Angola's largest oil and gas buyers.
- The two nations have diamond processing, fertiliser production, and critical minerals trade pacts
- Indian companies are involved in the retail, hospitality, agriculture, plastics, scrap metal, steel, trading, garments, real estate and other sectors in Angola

ALBANESE WINS 2ND THREE-YEAR TERM AS AUS PM

MELBOURNE, 3 MAY

Prime Minister Anthony Albanese has made history by winning a second consecutive three-year term, the first Australian leader to achieve this feat in 21 years. Following Saturday's election, opposition leader Peter Dutton conceded defeat, acknowledging, "We didn't do well enough during this campaign, and I accept full responsibility."

According to preliminary projections from the Australian Electoral Commission, Albanese's Labour Party secured 70 seats, while the conservative coalition led by Dutton won 24 seats in the 150-member House of Representatives. Minor parties and independent candidates are expected to take 13 seats. Respected election analyst Antony Green predicted Labour would ultimately clinch 76 seats, forming either a majority or minority government.

Key issues included energy policy and inflation, with both parties recognising a nationwide cost of living crisis. Dutton's coalition blamed inflation on government spending, promising cuts to public service jobs, while Labour labelled him "DOGE-y Dutton" for his conservative stance. *—PTI*

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CII Mysuru extends deadline for youth debate

MYSURU, 3 MAY

The Young Indians (Yi) Mysuru Chapter, part of the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII), has extended the registration deadline to 15 May for its debate competition, part of the Young Indians Parliament (YiP) 2025. YiP is a national initiative designed to instil civic awareness, leadership, and policy understanding among school students. With the theme "Where Young Minds Shape the Nation – Debate | Decide | Drive," it offers students a platform to engage in parliamentary simulations and structured debates. The competition will be held in three phases: City Rounds, Regional Rounds, and National Finals. Top performers will progress through each stage. Schools in and around Mysuru are invited to submit Expressions of Interest. In 2024, YiP saw participation from 4,300 students across 720 schools. This year's topics include AI readiness, sustainability, education reform, youth empowerment, women and child safety, and cybersecurity. Visit Yi School Hub for details. —*Salar News*

Weary Mangaluru remains calm day after violence

Communal tension rocked City after Hindu activist's murder

MANGALURU, 3 MAY

The situation in Mangaluru remained peaceful on Saturday, a day after tensions erupted following the murder of a Hindutva activist here, police said.

Suhas Shetty, a known rowdy sheeter and Hindutva activist, was murdered late on Thursday within the Bajpe police station limits in Mangaluru.

No untoward incidents were reported on Saturday, and normalcy prevailed in the city, police said.

Following Shetty's murder, VHP gave a bandh call on Friday with shops being shut in Mangaluru.

KSRTC had also suspended services to suburban areas after their buses were stoned near the Pumpwell and Kankanady and cases of assaults were registered.

Home Minister G Parameshwara and District In-charge Minister Dinesh Gundu Rao rushed to Mangaluru on Friday and held high-level discussions with Police Commissioner Anupam Agrawal and Deputy Commissioner Mullai Muhilan.

State Home Minister G Parameshwara rushed to Mangaluru on Friday and held high-level discussions ***PHOTO: X/@DRPARAMESHWARA***

The duo reviewed the security arrangements and appealed for calm, assuring that strict action would be taken against those responsible.

The bus service is still under suspension in the suburban areas. The KSRTC, however, operated a skeletal service to mofussil areas and the State capital on Saturday. The markets were opened with minimal operations and offices with skeletal staff.

Police forces continued to maintain a strong presence across sensitive areas, and preventive measures remain in place to ensure peace.

Following the murder, police enforced prohibitory order across Mangaluru from 2 to 6 May. —*PTI*

BJP ALLEGES GOVT OF TARGETING HINDUTVA VOICES

MANGALURU, 3 MAY

Former Minister V Sunil Kumar on Saturday accused the government of attempting to divert the investigation into the murder of Hindu activist Suhas Shetty by holding select meetings and misusing state machinery.

He alleged that the proposed Anti-Communal Task Force for the coastal districts of Dakshina Kannada and Udupi is intended not to curb violence but to "suppress pro-Hindutva voices." "At this meeting, some of the leaders reportedly banged the table and issued veiled threats to the government. Their behaviour suggests they are now attempting to ride roughshod over the administration," he alleged.

"The purpose of forming an Anti-Communal Force is clear," Kumar said. —*PTI*

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah with other ministers unveils a 14 feet Baba Saheb BR Ambedkar bronze statue in front of mini Vidhana Soudha in Yelahanka, Bengaluru, on Saturday ***PHOTO: MOHAMMED ASAD***

Notify Krishna Tribunal award: CM to Centre

BENGALURU, 3 MAY

- State Chief Minister Siddaramaiah the State government will assert in the meeting that it will raise the dam height to 524 meters as there is no interim order by the Supreme Court.

State Chief Minister Siddaramaiah on Saturday said that the government will demand the Centre to issue a gazette notification for the award of Krishna Water Disputes Tribunal-2, at a meeting called by Union Jal Shakti Minister CR Patil next week.

This will facilitate the use of waters allocated to the state and allow for an increase in the height of the Almatti dam, Siddaramaiah added.

He said that the State government will assert in the meeting that it will raise the dam height to 524 meters as there is no interim order by the Supreme Court.

Jal Shakti Minister will chair a meeting on 7 May with water resources Ministers of Karnataka, Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh, and Telangana to discuss the report-cum-award of the Krishna Water Disputes Tribunal-2.

CM chaired a meeting with Deputy Chief Minister and Water Resources Minister DK Shivakumar, along with other Ministers, legal experts, and officials, to decide on the State government's stance.

Speaking to reporters after the consultation, he noted that he and Shivakumar had met the Central Minister regarding this matter.

"The Union Minister has now called a meeting, and in that meeting, we will demand that the notification be issued immediately. The second tribunal order allocated 173 TMC of water for use, and to store and utilise this amount of water, the dam height must be increased from 519 meters to 524 meters. For this, the gazette notification must happen," he said.

Shivakumar said an all-party meeting will be convened after the 7 May meeting with Patil. —*PTI*

Ready to wage war against Pakistan: Zameer

VIJAYANAGARA, 3 MAY

State Minister Zameer Ahmed Khan has said he is ready to wage war for the country against Pakistan.

The Minister for Housing, Waqf, and Minority Affairs in the Siddaramaiah-led government claimed that if Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Union Home Minister Amit Shah were to give him a suicide bomb, he would tie it to himself and go to Pakistan to fight.

"I have said this several times—we are Indians and Hindustanis. We have no relation with Pakistan. We are ready to wage war (against Pakistan). As a minister, I'm ready to go if I'm sent to wage war. I will go and fight for the country. Let's go," Khan said on Friday.

Speaking to reporters here, he claimed, "If needed, I will go with a suicide bomb. I'm not saying this as a joke or out of josh. If the country needs me, let Narendra Modi and Amit Shah give me a suicide bomb—I swear on Allah, I will tie it and go to Pakistan."

Meanwhile, reacting to Khan's statement, Union Minister Pralhad Joshi called it "childish".

"Believe in the military and stay quiet—that's enough. You don't need to make speeches or go there. Have faith in our soldiers and intelligence agencies, and remain silent. That will be your biggest service to the country," he said.

"Ensuring that such statements do not lower the morale of our soldiers will be Zameer's greatest service. Big namaskar to Zameer and his party if they just keep quiet," Joshi added. —*PTI*

State Minister Zameer Ahmed Khan has said he is ready to wage war for the country against Pakistan ***PHOTO: ANI***

FIR FILED AGAINST SONU NIGAM FOR REMARKS AGAINST KANNADIGAS

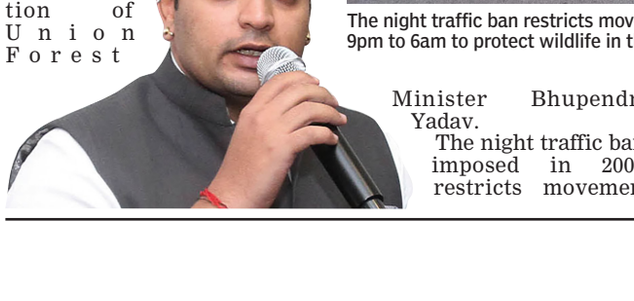
BENGALURU, 3 MAY

Playback singer Sonu Nigam faces legal action following allegations of making hurtful remarks about the Kannadiga community during a music event in City. A First Information Report (FIR) was filed by Dharmaraj A, the President of the Bengaluru City District Unit of State Rakshana Vedike, a pro-Kannada organisation.

The complaint claims Nigam made "objectionable and emotionally provocative" statements that have offended the Kannada-speaking community and incited animosity among diverse linguistic groups in State.

A portion of the complaint stated: "This complaint is lodged against the renowned singer Shri Sonu Nigam for making statements during a musical event on April 25 and 26 at East Point College of Engineering and Technology, Virgonagar, City, which deeply hurt the sentiments of the Kannadiga community and are likely to provoke violence." The police have registered the FIR under Sections 351(2), 352(I), and 353 of the Indian Penal Code and are currently investigating the incident.

A viral video of Nigam's remarks has sparked widespread outrage among many Kannadigas on social media. —*ANI*



A viral video of singer Sonu Nigam's remarks has sparked widespread outrage among many Kannadigas on social media ***PHOTO: X***

PROTEST AGAINST WAQF

Thousands gathered at Mysuru's Eidgah grounds on Saturday in a massive protest against the Waqf (Amendment) Act, 2025, following a call by the All India Muslim Personal Law Board. Protesters decried the Act as unconstitutional and communal, demanding its withdrawal while pledging to defend religious rights and the Constitution ***PHOTO: SALAR***

Speeding truck mows down woman

BENGALURU, 3 MAY

An elderly woman has lost her life after being struck by a speeding tipper lorry while attempting to cross the road near Richmond Road here.

The victim, Mary Victoria, 83, was a resident of Ramamurthy Nagar. She had reportedly attended a prayer service at a church and was on her way back home around 1.30pm on 2 May when the accident occurred.

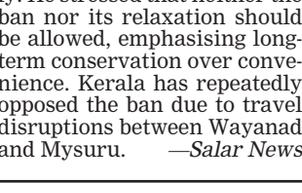


PHOTO: PTI

Mary was crossing the road near Fatima Bakery on Richmond Road when a tipper vehicle rammed into her. She sustained severe injuries.

Passers-by rushed her to the hospital immediately, where she succumbed to her injuries.

The police have registered a case. Efforts are underway to trace the driver of the vehicle. —*Salar News*

City rowdy hacked to death in broad daylight

BENGALURU, 3 MAY

A former rowdy-sheeter was on Saturday brutally hacked to death in broad daylight on the City's outskirts.

The deceased, Santosh alias Karadi, 32, was a resident of Siddapura in Harohalli. Once listed in the police's criminal register, Santosh had reportedly distanced himself from criminal activities after serving a jail term in connection with a murder case. He had returned to his native village and taken up farming.

According to police sources, Santosh was riding his two-wheeler to his farmland around 11.30am on Saturday. As he approached the KSRTC depot in Harohalli, a vehicle with a gang of assailants on board, rammed into his bike.

When he fell down, they attacked him with sharp weapons, killing him on the spot. The attackers then fled the scene.

Passers-by alerted the police, who arrived at the scene approximately half an hour later.

The body was sent for autopsy, and efforts are underway to identify and apprehend the suspects. Police suspect old rivalry to be the cause behind the murder.

Two more people were killed in a similar manner by assailants in Mangaluru and City this year. —*Salar News*

KALABURAGI MAN KILLS WIFE, HER LOVER

KALABURAGI, 3 MAY

A man allegedly hacked his wife and her lover to death over suspicions of an extramarital affair in Madanahipparga village of Aland taluk on Thursday night.

The accused, Shreemanta Shantamalla Bhakre, surrendered to police shortly after killing his wife, Srushti Shreemanta Bhakre, 21, and Khajappa Durgappa Gadivaddar, 23, from same village. He reportedly used a sickle to carry out the killings.

Police said, on Thursday, while Shreemanta was away working in a watermelon field, Srushti invited Khajappa to their home. Upon noticing Khajappa's arrival, neighbours locked the house and informed Shreemanta. Shreemanta caught the pair together. —*Salar News*

286 ANIMALS KILLED

BRT night traffic ban must stay: Yaduveer

MYSURU, 3 MAY

Mysuru MP Yaduveer Krishnadatta Chamaraja Wadiyar on Saturday opposed the Congress government's reported move to lift the night traffic ban through Bandipur Tiger Reserve. Addressing the media, he said he raised the issue during the recent Parliament session and brought it to the attention of Union Forest Minister Bhupendra Yadav.

The night traffic ban restricts movement through National Highway-766 from 9pm to 6am to protect wildlife in the core reserve ***PHOTO: X***

The night traffic ban, imposed in 2009, restricts movement through National Highway-766 from 9pm to 6am to protect wildlife in the core reserve. Bandipur, spanning 868.63 sq km in Chamarajanagar district, is a key part of the Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve. A Wildlife Conservation Foundation study (2005–2007) recorded 286 animal deaths from vehicle collisions, prompting the ban.

The issue has resurfaced following a letter from Wayanad MP Priyanka Gandhi Vadra urging the ban be reconsidered. The Karnataka government also withdrew a counter-affidavit from the Supreme Court, fuelling concerns.

Yaduveer said the Union Ministry and the National Tiger Conservation Authority would counter the move legally. He stressed that neither the ban nor its relaxation should be allowed, emphasising long-term conservation over convenience. Kerala has repeatedly opposed the ban due to travel disruptions between Wayanad and Mysuru. —*Salar News*

Jackfruit festival begins in Mysuru

MYSURU, 3 MAY

The two-day annual Jackfruit Festival, organised by Sahaja Samrudha in collaboration with Rotary Club, Amul Organic, and Rich Plus, began on Saturday at Nanjaraja Bahadur Choultry, drawing a large crowd from Mysuru and neighbouring districts. The event will conclude on Sunday.

Farmers from HD Kote, Periyapatna, Kollegal, Srirangapatna, Tiptur, Chikkanayakanahalli, and Haveri showcased a wide variety of jackfruits—including red, white, and yellow-fleshed types—known for their distinctive taste, texture, and appearance.

The festival featured a vibrant jackfruit food bazaar offering innovative delicacies such as jackfruit ice cream, jams, squashes, papads, halwa, kababs, holige, and dosa. Cooking demonstrations highlighted the fruit's versatility in traditional and modern recipes.

The festival featured a vibrant jackfruit food bazaar offering innovative delicacies ***PHOTO: SALAR***

Seedlings of 25 unique jackfruit varieties, including Rudrakshi Halasu, Siddu, Tubagere Halasu, Vietnam Super Early, and rare red-fleshed types like Chandra Halasu, were on display and sale. Over 50 groups also exhibited organic produce including millets, desi rice, cold-pressed oils, Bilwa (stone apple) juice, and saplings.

A drawing competition for children and adults and a training session on jackfruit farming techniques were held. Competitions such as jackfruit eating, lifting, and weight guessing will continue on Sunday. —*Salar News*

NIA chargesheets 3 accused in Srinagar grenade attack

NEW DELHI, 3 MAY

The National Investigation Agency (NIA) has chargesheeted three accused, linked with the banned Islamic State of Iraq and Syria/Islamic State Jammu and Kashmir terrorist group, for their involvement in the 2024 Srinagar market grenade attack, which killed one woman and left several others injured. The chargesheet named Sheikh Usama Yaseen, Umar Fayaz Sheikh and Afnan Mansoor Naik under relevant sections of the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, 1967, Explosive Substances Act and the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita. All three are currently in judicial custody. The three were arrested within days of the attack. Naik had actively conspired to wage a war against India through targeted attacks. *—PTI*

PHOTO: ANI

Assam orders repoll in 43 election booths

GUWAHATI, 3 MAY

Repolling will be held on 4 May, in 43 booths across five districts of Assam following the first phase of panchayat elections, officials said. The booths include 31 in Hailakandi, eight in Sribhumi, two in Lakhimpur, and one each in Golaghat and Majuli. The first phase, conducted on 2 May, covered 12,916 booths in 14 districts, with a voter turnout of 70.2 per cent from 89.59 lakh eligible voters. Majuli recorded the highest turnout at 80.02 per cent, while Sonitpur had the lowest at 61per cent. Minor violence was reported in Cachar, but polling remained peaceful elsewhere. The second phase is scheduled for 7 May. *—PTI*

One more arrested in Assam for 'pro-Pak' posts

GUWAHATI, 3 MAY

A man has been arrested in Assam's Dhubri district for allegedly 'defending' Pakistan following the Pahalgam terror attack on 22 April, which killed 26 people. Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma confirmed the arrest of Amar Ali, bringing the total number of arrests in similar cases to 37. Sarma described the arrested individuals as "traitors" and pledged that they would be "dealt with firmly" by the Assam Police. Earlier, AIUDF MLA Aminul Islam was also arrested on sedition charges for allegedly defending Pakistan. The crackdown follows the attack in Pahalgam, Jammu and Kashmir, and has raised concerns over the limits of free speech in the context of national security. *—PTI*

Japan Speaker to lead 45-member Assam delegation

GUWAHATI, 3 MAY

A 45-member delegation from Japan, led by House of Representative Speaker Nikita Fukushiro, is set to arrive in Assam for a three-day visit. The group is expected to engage in meetings with Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma and interact with elected representatives at the Assam legislative assembly during their stay. This interaction will also include the presence of Governor Laxman Prasad Acharya, followed by a cultural programme and dinner. On Sunday, the delegation plans to visit the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) in Guwahati and the Tata Semiconductor and Testing Facility. Additionally, they will inspect various projects funded by Japanese aid before concluding their visit on Monday. Chief Minister Sarma, who visited Japan in January, expressed his enthusiasm for the delegation's arrival, highlighting the potential to strengthen ties between Japan and Assam. *—PTI*

Pak test-fires Abdali missile under 'EXERCISE INDUS'

India calls it 'reckless' move; buys short-range defence system

ISLAMABAD/NEW DELHI 3 MAY

Pakistan on Saturday announced that it conducted a successful training launch of the Abdali Weapon System — a surface-to-surface missile with a range of 450km — amid heightened tensions with India following the Pahalgam terror attack.

"The launch was aimed at ensuring the operational readiness of troops and validating key technical parameters," the Army said. The missile launch was part of "Exercise INDUS".

President Asif Ali Zardari, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and services chiefs extended their congratulations to the participating troops, scientists, and engineers.

India, meanwhile, said it was a "reckless act of provocation" and a "dangerous escalation" of the situation, sources said. The test, under such "volatile conditions" is nothing short of a "blatant provocation" and a "desperate attempt to whip up tensions", sources added.

Sources also said Pakistan has been frantically issuing naval warnings, ramping up naval drills in the Arabian Sea.

New Delhi, meanwhile, has started the process to procure a next-generation Very Short Range Air Defence System or VSHORADS (NG), which engages aerial targets "both by day and night" and under all weather conditions.

Meanwhile, firing of small arms across the LoC continued into the ninth day. *—PTI*

The Abdali Weapon System, which successfully launched on Saturday, is a surface-to-surface missile with a range of 450km **PHOTO: SCREENGRAB**

Lanka cops search flight for terror suspect

Colombo, 3 May

Sri Lankan police searched a flight arriving from Chennai after being tipped-off that a suspect linked to the terror attack could be on board, police said on Saturday. The flight from Chennai arrived at Colombo's Bandaranaike International Airport at 11.59am and underwent a security inspection, Sri Lankan Airlines said. The aircraft was then cleared.

DIPLOMATIC WARFARE

Islamabad fumes as India asks IMF to review Pak loans

ISLAMABAD, 3 MAY

Pakistan termed India's requests to the IMF to review Islamabad's financial support programme as "politically motivated" after the Pahalgam terror attack.

The Express Tribune said Saturday quoting officials that India's attempt to involve the International Monetary Fund (IMF) "is an extension of its political campaign to isolate Pakistan diplomatically".

The IMF Executive Board is scheduled to meet Pakistan officials on 9 May for the first review of the Extended Funding Facility (EFF), and request for an arrangement under the resilience and sustainability facility.

The Express Tribune said officials argue that India's attempt to involve the IMF is an extension of its political campaign to isolate Pakistan diplomatically.

The newspaper quoted an adviser to Pakistan's Finance Ministry as confirming on Friday that the country's USD 7 billion IMF bailout, secured last year, remains "well on track" and critical for macroeconomic stability.

Islamabad also received an additional USD 1.3 billion in climate resilience funding in March 2025.

"This programme is not just stabilising Pakistan—it's building confidence," said finance adviser Khurram Schehzad. "The latest IMF review went smoothly, and our meetings with global financial institutions in Washington reflected high investor interest."

India on Friday said it will be asking global multilateral agencies, including the IMF, to have a relook at funds and loans provided to Pakistan. *—PTI*

BJP calls Cong 'Pak working committee'

NEW DELHI, 3 MAY

The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has accused the Congress Party of consistently providing "oxygen" to Pakistan, particularly in light of remarks made by former Punjab Chief Minister Charanjit Singh Channi, who questioned the authenticity of the Balakot air strikes following the 2019 Pulwama terror attack.

BJP national spokesperson Sambit Patra held a press conference where he claimed that the Congress operates like a "Pakistan Working Committee," alleging that its leaders make statements detrimental to India's interests while the party's official resolutions contradict them.

Channi doubted the effectiveness of the air strikes, stating, "We have never seen where in Pakistan the strikes were done and where people were killed." While he initially demanded proof of the strikes, he later retracted this statement, claiming no proof was necessary.

Sambit Patra **PHOTO: ANI**

Patra emphasised that such comments are damaging to the morale of Indian armed forces and the public, highlighting a pattern in Congress leaders' controversial statements. He mentioned that a Pakistani senator referenced opposition figures, including Akhilesh Yadav and members of the Aam Aadmi Party, for their criticism of the Modi government.

In addition, Patra critiqued Congress for attempting to claim credit for the government's upcoming caste census, reminding the public of their failure to execute similar measures during their 60 years in power. *—PTI*

Rakesh Tikait's turban removed during rally; 1 held

MUZAFFARNAGAR, 3 MAY

The Bhartiya Kisan Union (BKU) has announced an "emergency Kisan Panchayat" this Saturday at the GIC ground following an incident at a protest rally against the Pahalgam terror attack, where farmer leader Rakesh Tikait faced opposition.

During the 'Akrosh rally', organised by Right-wing groups, Tikait was reportedly heckled as a miscreant removed his turban, as captured in various videos.

BKU national President Naresh Tikait described the incident as premeditated, alleging it was a politically motivated conspiracy aimed at undermining the farmers' movement.

Rakesh Tikait said some hecklers allegedly under the influence of alcohol.

Muzaffarnagar police registered a case and taken a suspect, Saurabh Verma, into custody for questioning. *—PTI*

Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister Omar Abduallah with Prime Minister Narendra Modi at the latter's residence on Saturday **PHOTO: PTI**

J&K CM OMAR ABDULLAH CALLS ON MODI TO DISCUSS KEY ISSUES; FIRST MEETING SINCE ATTACK

NEW DELHI, 3 MAY

Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister Omar Abdullah called on Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday and discussed various key issues, including last week's terror attack in Pahalgam, officials said.

The meeting at the Prime Minister's residence lasted around 30 minutes, they said.

This is the first meeting between the two leaders since the 22 April terror attack.

During the meeting, Omar briefed Modi on the prevailing ground situation and conveyed the deep sense of solidarity and grief people the state felt, among other concerning issues, an official said.

They also discussed the fallout the attack had on the booming tourism industry and the upcoming Amarnath Yatra, the official added.

The 38-day annual Amarnath Yatra is scheduled to start on 3 July from the twin routes -- the traditional 48-kilometre Pahalgam in Anantnag district and the 14-kilometre shorter but steeper Baltal route in Ganderbal district. *—PTI*

Nadda and Stalin trade barbs at TN poll rally

CHENNAI, 3 MAY

Union Health Minister JP Nadda has emphasised the significance of Saiva Siddhanta in shaping Tamil identity during his visit to Tamil Nadu ahead of upcoming elections.

Nadda was visiting the state to review the party's preparedness ahead of the 2026 elections.

Addressing the sixth international conference on Saiva Siddhanta at the SRM Institute, he described the philosophy as a civilisation ethos rooted in devotion and virtue. Nadda praised the historical contributions of Tamil poets and saints, noting the enduring relevance of their works.

In response, Tamil Nadu Chief Minister MK Stalin accused the BJP-led Central government of employing "pressure tactics" to manipulate the AIADMK into alliance, claiming that Edappadi K Palaniswami's decision was motivated by a desire to protect his leadership within the party.

Stalin further claimed that the ED and CBI was being used as an instrument of "political vendetta," asserting that the DMK would confront these threats legally and with public support.

Stalin's remarks came during a meeting with DMK district secretaries who are currently organising events across 1,244 locations to celebrate four years of his administration.

He said that the DMK's strength lies in its robust party structure, distancing from the tactics used by the Opposition, and exuding confidence. *—PTI/ANI*

Union Health Minister JP Nadda visited Tamil Nadu to review the BJP's preparedness ahead of the polls **PHOTO: X/JPNADDA**

TMC claims ED targets only Opposition

NEW DELHI, 3 MAY

Trinamool Congress (TMC) leader Saket Gokhale claimed that a staggering 98 per cent of cases initiated by the Enforcement Directorate (ED) against politicians are directed at Opposition members. The remaining 2 per cent, he said, pertain to individuals who switched allegiance to the BJP.

Citing comments made by ED Director Rahul Navin, Gokhale alleged that the uptick in cases since 2014 is instigated by Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government. *—PTI*

Haryana demands unconditional water

CHANDIGARH, 3 MAY

Tensions between Punjab and Haryana over water sharing escalated following an all-party meeting in Haryana that urged the Punjab government to release water from the Bhakra dam unconditionally. This meeting occurred after Punjab's all-party gathering expressed support for its government's refusal to provide additional water to BJP-led Haryana.

Haryana Chief Minister Nayab Singh Saini, addressing the press, condemned Punjab's actions as "unconstitutional" and a violation of federal principles. The meeting called for immediate implementation of directives from the Bhakra Beas Management Board's (BBMB) technical committee.

Saini stressed that Haryana's request for water was not a confrontation but rather a plea for cooperation, highlighting the need for Punjab to empathise with its neighbour's struggles. He insisted that the Mann government must lift the ban on water release.

Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann had previously claimed his state had already utilised 103 per cent of its allocated water share and would not tolerate what he termed "robbery" of its resources.

The BBMB oversees water distribution among Punjab, Haryana, and Rajasthan from key dams like Bhakra and Pong, crucial for the irrigation needs of the region. *—PTI*

Tejashwi urges PM for review of reservation policies

PATNA, 3 MAY

RJD leader Tejashwi Yadav has urged Prime Minister Narendra Modi to conduct a "comprehensive review of social protection and reservation policies" following the completion of the upcoming caste enumeration in the national census. Yadav, the Leader of the Opposition in Bihar's Assembly, shared his letter on social media, emphasising that the caste census is merely the initial step towards achieving social justice.

In his correspondence, Yadav stressed the need for the upcoming delimitation exercise to reflect the social realities revealed by the census data, advocating for enhanced political representation of Other Backward Classes (OBCs) and Extremely Backward Classes (EBCs).

"The private sector, which has been a major beneficiary of public resources, cannot remain insulated from social justice imperatives," Yadav wrote. *—PTI*

2 YEARS OF CONFLICT

'44 foreign trips but PM no show in Manipur'

NEW DELHI, 3 MAY

Congress President Mallikarjun Kharge on Saturday accused Prime Minister Narendra Modi of failing to uphold 'Rajdharma' by not visiting Manipur even once in the last two years.

He said Manipur continues to be troubled for two years without the Prime Minister setting foot on its soil.

Just two days ago, 25 people were injured in a violent clash in Tamenglong district, he noted, adding that more than 260 people died, 68,000 people displaced and thousands are still living in relief camps.

"Since January 2022, your last election rally in Manipur, you (Modi) have made 44 Foreign visits around the globe and 250 domestic visits across the nation, yet you have not spent a single second in Manipur. Why this apathy and disdain for the people of Manipur? Where is the political accountability?" he asked.

"Why did the double engine government fail in its Constitutional duty to provide security and safety for its citizens? Why did you not sack the Chief Minister (name?) earlier? Your double assault government is still failing Manipur. Despite the Home Ministry's rule in place now, violence has not stopped," Kharge claimed.

He alleged that the Centre passed a resolution for the President's rule "in a hurried manner," to hide its "rank incompetence."

Kharge said Manipur's economy lost thousands of crores.

Jairam Ramesh, Congress General Secretary in-charge Communications,said Home Minister Amit Shah, to whom Modi has outsourced management of Manipur was a "big failure".

"Manipur deserves better," he wrote on X. *—PTI*

Congress President Mallikarjun Kharge called the 'double engine' government in the state a 'double assault' **PHOTO: PTI**

Man held for supplying fake Schengen visas

NEW DELHI, 3 MAY

The Delhi police detained a 29-year-old man from Uttar Pradesh, Abhinesh Saxena, for allegedly facilitating the procurement of fake Schengen visas for two young men from Punjab. Saxena reportedly delivered forged travel documents to cousins Taranveer Singh, 18, and Gagandeep Singh, 20, who were intercepted with bogus visas at Indira Gandhi International Airport while attempting to board a flight to Rome via Doha. The cousins engaged an agent named Lalli, who demanded Rs 31 lakh for the arrangements. Following failed raids to locate Lalli, police apprehended Saxena. During interrogation, he admitted to assisting with illegal migration since 2022. Authorities still search for Lalli and others implicated in the network. *—PTI*

3 elephants found dead in Manas National Park

KOKRAJHAR, 3 MAY

In a tragic incident, three wild elephants were discovered dead in Manas National Park in Assam, near the India-Bhutan border. The carcasses were located in the Palengshi Beat area of the Panbari range by forest guards on Friday. Initial suspicions indicate that poaching may be responsible for the deaths, although investigations are ongoing to confirm the cause. Officials have announced that post-mortem examinations will be conducted in the forest before the animals are given their last rites. The discovery adds to ongoing concerns about wildlife protection and the threats posed by illegal hunting in the region. Authorities have vowed to intensify measures to safeguard the park's wildlife and prevent such incidents in the future. *—PTI*

Police arrest main Murshidabad murder accused

KOLKATA, 3 MAY

A significant breakthrough has occurred in the Murshidabad district violence case, with the Special Task Force (STF) of West Bengal Police apprehending prime accused Nurul Islam. He was arrested early on Saturday from Farakka after evading capture since the father-son duo's murder amid unrest connected to the Waqf (Amendment) Act protests. This latest arrest brings the total number apprehended in this case to eight. At least three individuals died during the violence that plagued these Muslim-majority areas from 8 to 12 April, leading to widespread unrest and over 274 arrests. The suspect is expected to be presented in court later today, as police continue to investigate the incidents surrounding the protests and the deadly clashes. *—PTI*

PHOTO: X

Smoke erupts from Jaipur-Jodhpur express train

JAIPUR, 3 MAY

Panic briefly gripped passengers aboard the Jaipur-Jodhpur intercity express when smoke was detected emanating from the engine near Gotan railway station in Nagaur district on Saturday. The train was halted for approximately one hour as crew members addressed the situation, which was attributed to the overheating of certain engine components. Fortunately, no injuries or significant incidents occurred during this scare. Following the engine's replacement, the train resumed its journey to Jodhpur. Railway officials confirmed that the service, which departs Jaipur at 6 am and arrives in Jodhpur at 11:10am, continued without further issue. Passengers expressed relief as operations resumed smoothly after the frightening ordeal. *—PTI*

Goa govt cancels all functions for 3 days

Goa CM launches a probe into the stampede; 5 senior officers transfered from scene

PANAJI, 3 MAY

Five people are critically injured and on ventilator support following the stampede at Shree Devi Lairai Zatra, Goa on Saturday. The government formed a committee of doctors to treat them **PHOTO: PTI**

The Goa government on Saturday announced that all functions supported by it stand cancelled for the next three days in the wake of a stampede during a temple festival that killed six devotees and injured more than 70.

"In view of the tragic stampede incident that occurred during the Shree Devi Lairai Zatra at Shirgao, and as an expression of condolences to the departed and their families, the government of Goa directs that all government-supported festive programmes and public celebrations scheduled over the next three days be cancelled or postponed," a circular issued by Shreyas D'Silva, Under Secretary of General Administration Department, stated.

Chief Minister Pramod Sawant said a magisterial inquiry will be conducted into the stampede.

Sawant said a fact-finding committee, headed by State Revenue Secretary Sandeep Jacques and comprising senior police officer Varma Sharma, Parimal Abhishekh, State Director of Transport, and Tikam Singh Varma, SP, South Goa, as its members has been constituted.

In a message on X, the Chief Minister said, "A magisterial inquiry will be instituted to thoroughly investigate the incident "

Talking to reporters at the site, Sawant said "We will make the report public."

The committee will submit its report by Sunday morning.

The incident occurred around 3am on Saturday at Sree Lairai Devi temple in Shirgao village, about 40 km from Panaji. The stampede broke out as thousands of devotees thronged the narrow lanes to the temple for the annual festival.

Sawant visited the state-run North Goa District Hospital in Mapusa, where some of the injured were admitted.

Eleven injured people were admitted to Goa Medical College and Hospital and five of them are on the ventilator, while eight persons are undergoing treatment in North Goa District Hospital.

The government further formed a committee of senior doctors from various departments to treat five critically injured victims at the Medical College and Hospital (GMCH)

The state government also transferred five senior officials, including the North Goa Collector and the Superintendent of Police after the stampede. *—PTI*

Probe into smoke at Kozhikode hospital underway: Vijayan

KOZHIKODE/NEW DELHI, 3 MAY

Pinarayi Vijayan **PHOTO: PTI**

Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan on Saturday said that a probe into the smoke incident at the government hospital in Kozhikode was underway. Some claimed that five patients died because of the smoke, but the medical college authorities dismissed the charge, and said none of the deaths were due to the smoke.

Thick black smoke was seen billowing out from the UPS room inside the emergency department building of the state-run medical college at 7pm on Friday, causing panic.

Speaking to reporters in New Delhi, the Chief Minister said such an incident should not have happened and Health Minister Veena George has already proceeded to Kozhikode.

"The exact cause of the incident can be found out after the electrical inspectorate's probe. Minister George has already left for Kozhikode to visit the medical college. The other things can be decided after that," he said.

Meanwhile, the Medical College police said they have registered a case into the death of three patients reported at the government hospital after the smoke incident.

A short circuit is suspected to be the cause, hospital sources said.

Congress's Wayanad legislator T Siddique alleged gross negligence on the side of the medical college and health department authorities. *—PTI*

NEET probe: NMC cancels admission to 14

NEW DELHI, 3 MAY

The NMC directed immediate suspension of 26 MBBS students found complicit in NEET-UG 2024 malpractices and cancelled admission of 14 students for the academic year 2024-25, an official said.

As part of the ongoing investigations by multiple agencies into the NEET-UG 2024 paper leak case, the National Testing Agency identified instances of unfair means and debarred 42 candidates for three years — 2024,2025, 2026 —- from taking the NEET-UG.

It also debarred nine candidates for 2025 and 2026 sessions.

The candidature of 215 candidates who appeared in the NEET-UG 2024 exam has been put on hold pending an investigation, the source said.

The action against the students has been initiated based on the findings of the CBI.

"Given the severity of these violations and their potential to undermine the credibility of the medical education system, the National Medical Commission (NMC) has issued directives to the concerned medical colleges and institutions to immediately suspend the 26 MBBS students found to be complicit," the source said.

The directive comes ahead of the NEET-UG 2025 scheduled for 4 May. *—PTI*

Teenager gangraped by nine in R'than

KOTA, 2 MAY

A 17-year-old girl, who was reportedly gang-raped by nine youths in a field in Jhalawar, Rajasthan, bravely sat for her Class 11 examinations before giving her statement to police regarding the incident.

The alleged assault occurred on Tuesday night while the girl was attending a wedding in a nearby village.

According to police, the accused, who included a minor, forcibly took the girl to a secluded are and gangraped her. Following the incident, the girl registered a complaint the next day, prompting police to file a case under applicable sections of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita and the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act (POSCO).

Nine suspects were identified and apprehended, with eight of them presented before the POCSO court, which ordered their placement in judicial custody. The minor was taken before a juvenile justice board and directed to a juvenile shelter home.

Notably, investigations revealed that the survivor was acquainted with some of her assailants, as they hailed from the same village. Police officials said further inquiries are ongoing. *—PTI*

The accused, allegedly involved in a case of rape, and blackmail of college students, is escorted by police after being produced before the district court, in Bhopal **PHOTO: ANI**

Rape of Bhopal college students: Main accused shot at

BHOPAL, 3 MAY

- Farhan Ali, who allegedly masterminded the racket, was shot in the leg after he tried to escape when the police vehicle stopped for him to attend a natures call

The primary suspect arrested in a case involving the rape and blackmail of female college students in Bhopal was shot and injured after allegedly attempting to escape custody by trying to wrest a policeman's firearm. This incident occurred on Friday night while the accused, Farhan Ali, was being taken to a crime scene for evidence collection.

Five individuals have been detained in connection with the case, which involves allegations that they raped the students while concealing their identities and subsequently blackmailed them using recorded videos. Deputy Commissioner of Police (DCP) Priyanka Shukla reported that the police vehicle was stopped in Sarwar village for Ali to attend to a nature call when he attempted the escape.

She said Farhan allegedly tried to snatch a pistol from a sub-inspector. During the struggle, a shot was fired, injuring Ali in the leg.

On Friday evening, Right-wing outfits protested in Bhopal, terming the racket "love jihad". The NCW has also launched an investigation into the gangrapes. *—PTI*

UP launches WhatsApp chatbot for transport services

LUCKNOW, 3 MAY

- It allows users to check challan details, renew driving licences, and offers guidance for road tax payment, transfer of ownership, and application status tracking

In a move to make government services more accessible and efficient, the Uttar Pradesh Transport Department launched a 24x7 WhatsApp chatbot to offer key transport-related services directly to citizens, officials said Saturday.

"It brings the department closer to the public," Transport Commissioner Brajesh Narain Singh said.

He explained the chatbot eliminates the need for citizens to stand in long queues or make repeated visits to RTO offices. From checking challan details to renewing a driving licence, everything can be managed with a smartphone.

The service is integrated with the central Vahan and Sarthi databases, ensuring that the information shared is real-time and authenticated. The chatbot is available in multiple languages. "This is particularly helpful in a state as linguistically diverse as Uttar Pradesh," Singh said.

It also offers step-by-step guidance for services such as road tax payment, transfer of ownership, and application status tracking.

Citizens can start using the chatbot by messagin "Hi" to 8005441222. *—PTI*

Mercedes hits bike, falls off bridge in Pune

PUNE, 3 MAY

An accident in Pune early Saturday morning claimed the life of a motorcyclist and left three others injured when a Mercedes collided with a motorcycle and fell off Wadgaon Bridge on Sinhgad Road.

The driver succumbed to his injuries shortly after arriving at the hospital. The pillion rider also was also injured but is currently receiving treatment. The Mercedes plunged off the bridge onto the road below, resulting in injuries to its occupants as well. *—PTI*

Naxal shot dead in Chhattisgarh

GARIABAND, 3 MAY

The Naxal, Yogesh, carried a bounty of Rs 8 lakh **PHOTO: ANI**

A prominent Naxalite, Yogesh, carrying a reward of Rs 8 lakh, was killed in a gunfight with security forces in the Gariaband district of Chhattisgarh. The clash occurred on Friday evening in a forested area near Motipani village, under the jurisdiction of Jugad police station, during an anti-Naxal operation led by a joint team of the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) and E-30, a local police unit.

The operation was initiated following intelligence reports regarding Naxalite activity in the region, located approximately 180 km from Raipur, the state capital. After the exchange of fire ceased, authorities recovered the body of the deceased Naxalite, identified as Yogesh, a divisional committee member, along with a self-loading rifle (SLR) and a substantial cache of explosive materials.

This incident marks the latest action in a series of confrontations in the state this year, bringing the total number of Naxalites killed to 145. Of these, 128 fatalities occurred in the Bastar division, which includes seven districts, while 17 were reported in Gariaband district, part of the Raipur division. *—PTI*

ON ADVICE OF A MONK

3-year-old dies after fast unto death ritual

INDORE, 3 MAY

Varsha Jain and Piyush Jain display a certificate recognising their three-year-old daughter, Viyana Jain, as the youngest to observe Santhara issued by the Golden Book of World Records, in Indore, on Friday **PHOTO: PTI**

A three-year-old girl suffering from a brain tumour died after her parents initiated her into the Jain religious practice of fasting unto death.

The girl, Viyana Jain breathed her last on 21 March. The incident came to light this week when the Golden Book of World Records issued called her "the youngest person in the world to vow the Santhara".

Santhara, also known as Sallekhana, is a Jain ritual of voluntarily fasting unto death. A person gradually reduces their intake of food and water until death as a means of achieving spiritual purification.

Piyush Jain, the father, said, "My daughter was diagnosed with a brain tumour in January. She underwent a surgery, following which her health improved. But in March, her condition deteriorated."

On the night of 21 March, he took his seriously ill daughter to monk Rajesh Muni Maharaj.

"Maharaj told us that the girl's end is near and she should be given the Santhara vow," he said. Jain said that his daughter died within 10 minutes of the ritual's completion.

Her mother, Varsha Jain, said, "I cannot describe how difficult the decision was."

The Rajasthan High Court in 2015 declared the practice a punishable offence under sections 306 (abetment to suicide) and 309 (attempt to suicide) of the Indian Penal Code. However, the Supreme Court later stayed the order. *—PTI*

IIT-K student booked after she claimed cop raped her

KANPUR, 3 MAY

- An IIT-K student had earlier claimed that the then ACP had raped her. However, the accused's wife claims that her husband was 'honey trapped'

In a turn of events, police have registered an FIR against a 27-year-old research scholar from the Indian Institute of Technology-Kanpur (IIT-K), who had previously alleged rape against a senior police official.

The FIR was filed on a complaint from Suhaila Saif, the wife of Mohsin Khan, an assistant commissioner of police (ACP) accused of sexually exploiting the IIT-K student.

The FIR was registered at Rawatpur police station following an order from the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's court. Sub-Inspector Pushpraj Singh has been tasked with the investigation.

Saif claims that on 1 December last year, the IIT-K student entered her home, locked the door, and expressed her desire to marry Khan, calling Saif and her children obstacles.

Saif believes that her husband is the victim of a "honey trap".

Following the initial rape allegations, Khan was transferred and later suspended. His PhD programme in cybercrime and criminology was terminated by IIT-K four months ago.

He was also booked on Thursday for seeking "sexual intercourse by employing deceitful means" *—PTI*

AN ADORABLE PLAYDATE

World's tallest and smallest dogs, Reggie and Pearl, met for a playdate in Idaho, US, on Saturday. Reggie, a 3ft 3inch Great Dane, hosted Pearl, the 3.59inch Chihuahua, for 2 days. The gentle giant and the tiny diva bonded over two days of exploring the house, posing for pictures and playing in the backyard before lounging on the couch

PHOTO: X @GWR

2 years on, Manipur families long for home

The devastating impact of the ethnic conflict that rocked Manipur two years ago is still being felt, with thousands of Internally Displaced Persons) continuing to live in overcrowded camps ***PHOTO: PTI***

From running a successful business to no income and three children to support, G Kipgen is waiting to return to his home in Imphal amidst a sense of despair. But he is not alone, there are many like him.

The devastating impact of the ethnic conflict that rocked Manipur two years ago is still being felt, with thousands of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) continuing to live in overcrowded camps — waiting and hoping to return to their homes amidst fragile peace.

"I used to run a successful coaching institute in Imphal. It's all gone now. With no source of income and three children, I am worried about their future. I can't focus on anything. What is even more concerning is that there is no sign of how things will get better," an emotional Kipgen said.

Over 260 people have been killed, 1,500 injured, and over 70,000 people displaced after the ethnic violence broke out between the Meitei and the Kuki-Zo people on 3 May, 2023.

Despite the sacking of controversial Chief Minister N Biren Singh for "not being able to handle" the situation, and the imposition of President's rule in February this year, peace remains a far cry.

"My greatest worry is the future of my two little children," said Abung, a Meitei IDP from Churachandpur district who is staying in a prefabricated home in Bishnupur district.

"Earlier, I had a thriving grocery business. While living in a prefabricated home is better than staying in a relief camp, it doesn't compare to the freedom and happiness of living in one's own home," he added.

As the IDPs struggle to rebuild their lives from the trauma of displacement, civil society organisations on both sides continue to hold firm to their demands.

While hill-based Kukis call for a separate administration, the Meiteis, who are in themajority in Imphal valley, seek implementation of the National Register of Citizens (NRC), and the deportation of those they consider illegal immigrants.

Despite monitoring by central and state authorities to control violence and improve the lives of the affected, there is growing frustration among the general public.

The IDPs, whether Meitei or Kuki, have voiced deep insecurity about their families' future and are grappling with severe psychological distress.

Many remain unable to comprehend how they suddenly became victims of hate and anger.

The government and NGOs imparted skill training to IDPs to make them employable, but these initiatives have done little to ease their emotional burden.

Abenao Devi, living in a prefabricated home in Imphal, said, "In the first few months after the violence broke out, there was significant community support, and provisions arrived on time. But gradually, we've been forgotten. Often, we have to depend on the mercy of others for basic needs. It is humiliating."

The IDPs are doing odd jobs they never imagined doing before, she said adding both the central and state governments are unable to curb hostilities and restore normalcy even after two years.

A central security agency official claimed: "The most problematic and worrisome aspect of this two-year-long conflict is that armed groups and their associates have taken control of the respective communities. They are pushing their agenda ignoring the suffering of ordinary people, particularly the IDPs."

He added, "There has also been a massive rise in extortion by armed outfits in the Imphal valley and illegal taxation along highways passing through Kuki-majority areas. Several previously defunct militant outfits have been revitalised, recruiting mostly unemployed, poorly educated youth." *—PTI*

SALAR ساڈا

Manipur lives on the edge and continues to burn

Security personnel standing guard in Manipur ***PHOTO: ANI***

Shutdown called by various groups on Saturday to mark two years of the ethnic strife in Manipur affected normal lives in both the Maitei-controlled Imphal Valley and the Kuki-dominated hill districts.

Meitei group Coordinating Committee on Manipur Integrity (COCOMI) called a shutdown in the valley districts, while the Zomi Students Federation (ZSF) and the Kuki Students Organisation (KSO) have imposed the shutdown in the hill districts.

It was on this day in 2023 that ethnic clashes broke out between the Meteis and Kukis, which left over 260 people killed, 1,500 injured, and over 70,000 people displaced, according to officials.

Markets were shut, public vehicles remained off the roads, and private offices remained closed across the state. A few private vehicles were seen on the roads in the morning.

Schools, colleges and other institutes were also shut.

Security forces have also been deployed at key locations to prevent any unwanted activities, officials said.

COCOMI will hold 'Manipur Peoples' Convention' at Khuman Lampak Stadium in Imphal. It has urged the people to attend the public meeting in large numbers.

A candlelight march will also be held in the evening in Imphal to pay homage to those who died in the violence.

The Kuki community in the hill districts of Churachandpur and Kangpokpi districts are observing 'Day of Separation', demanding a separate territory.

A programme will be held at the 'Wall of Remembrance', which has been built in Churachandpur town in memory of those killed in the ethnic violence, at 11 am. Another programme is scheduled at the Sehken Burial site, where some of the Kuki people killed in the violence have been buried, from 2pm. *—PTI*

Meitei group Coordinating Committee on Manipur Integrity (COCOMI) called a shutdown in the valley districts ***PHOTO: PTI***

LETTERS

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More children find families as India's adoption landscape shifts

In India, there has been a noticeable surge in adoption numbers over the past decade, with their number increasing from 3,677 in 2015-16 to 4,027 in 2018-19 ***PHOTO: FREEPIK***

Neeraj's (name changed) note to his mother was simple yet profound: "I love you Mom because you take me out to play."

Neeraj's words have been the culmination of a journey that began four years earlier, when he was born with a condition called "knock knees" and left at a Child Care Institution just a day old. He was put up for adoption, and for years, families hesitated, often discouraged by his medical condition.

His story was one of waiting – for the right family, waiting to be seen and chosen.

Families came and went, but his diagnosis often led to the end of the conversation. That was until 2021, when a couple saw him not as a problem to be solved, but as "their child."

Since then, Neeraj's life has transformed. His new parents enrolled him in swimming lessons to help with his legs, took him for regular check-ups, and showered him with love.

Today, he is thriving, learning to swim, acting in school plays, and mastering parkour. Neeraj's journey is not an isolated one.

In India, there has been a noticeable surge in adoption numbers over the past decade, with their number increasing from 3,677 in 2015-16 to 4,027 in 2018-19.

While there was a dip during the COVID-19 pandemic, according to the latest official data, there has been a continued positive trend, with record 4,515 child adoptions in FY 2024-25, the highest since 2015-16.

As of the current financial year, 420 children have already been adopted from the Orphan/Abandoned/Surrendered (OAS) category.

Of these, 342 children were adopted by Resident Indian (RI) parents, eight by Non-Resident Indians (NRI), six by Overseas Citizens of India (OCI), and 11 by foreigners.

But even with this progress, the demand for adoption far outpaces the availability of adoptable children.

As of April 2025, there are 35,701 prospective adoptive parents (PAPs) registered on CARA's CARINGS portal. Among these, 32,873 are Resident Indians waiting for OAS children, followed by 300 NRIs, 216 OCIs, and 319 foreign nationals.

For relative and stepchild adoptions, 1,934 in-country and 59 inter-country applicants are in the queue.

Contrastingly, only 2,435 children are currently available for adoption nationwide. Of these, 897 are categorised as "normal" and 1,538 children with special needs.

But beyond the statistics are deeply personal journeys.

Sukama (name changed), born into adversity and orphaned young, was placed in institutional care before she found foster parents in a compassionate couple in Ernakulam, Kerala.

After a nurturing year, they sought legal adoption.

Sukama was adopted just weeks before turning 18.

In Mizoram, a 15-year-old girl already bonded with her stepfather.

Legal adoption was a race against time, initiated just days before her 18th birthday.

But due to swift action by the authorities, the process from registration on 8 July to the legal order on 25 July, 2024, took 16 days, making her legally a daughter before adulthood, an official who facilitated the process said.

More than 8,500 children were added to the adoption pool, many of whom had been waiting for years in institutions.

In the same period, 245 new agencies were added to CARA's network, further expanding the reach of adoption opportunities, the official said.

The shift in attitudes towards adoption is perhaps the most significant aspect of this transformation, the official added.

"What was once seen as an extraordinary or rare decision has now become a more common and accepted path for families," the official added. *—PTI*

PHOTO: X

Pregnant woman dies as bomb explodes in Greece

THESSALONIKI, 3 MAY

A 38-year-old woman was killed early Saturday morning in Thessaloniki, northern Greece, when a bomb she was carrying exploded in her hands, police reported. Authorities believe she intended to plant the device outside a nearby bank at around 5am The explosion caused damage to nearby shop fronts and parked vehicles. The woman was known to police for her involvement in several previous robberies. Investigators are examining her potential links to extreme left-wing groups. The blast did not cause any additional injuries to anyone else, and the area has since been secured. Police are reviewing surveillance footage and continuing forensic investigations to determine whether others were involved in the attempted bombing. *—PTI*

Chilean sparks euthanasia debate amidst bill delay

SANTIAGO, 3 MAY

Susana Moreira,41, a Chilean woman with muscular dystrophy, has become the face of the country's euthanasia debate. Diagnosed at eight, she has spent two decades bedridden, progressively losing her ability to care for herself. Moreira is advocating for euthanasia, which is currently illegal in Chile, to allow those with terminal or severe illnesses the right to choose their death. While the Chilean government, led by President Gabriel Boric, pledged to pass the bill in 2025, it has stalled in the Senate. Public support for the bill is high, with recent surveys showing over 75 per cent in favour. Despite progress, opposition remains, among health professionals who emphasise the importance of palliative care. Moreira seeks peace of mind, knowing she has the option to choose. *—PTI*

Weinstein accuser braves gruelling cross examination

NEW YORK, 3 MAY

Harvey Weinstein's accuser, Miriam Haley, broke down in tears and swore during cross-examination in court on Friday, as defence lawyer Jennifer Bonjean questioned her account of Weinstein forcing oral sex on her nearly 20 years ago. Haley asserted, "He was the one who raped me, not the other way around," while the lawyer responded, "It's for the jury to decide." The emotional exchange prompted Judge Curtis Farber to halt proceedings, sending the jury on a break. When trial resumed, Haley remained composed but visibly frustrated. Weinstein has denied the charges. Haley maintains she was never romantically interested in Weinstein and that he assaulted her in 2006. *—PTI*

B'desh Islamist group rally against women's rights

DHAKA, 3 MAY

Thousands of supporters of an influential Bangladeshi Islamist group on Saturday rallied here demanding abolition of a government instituted women related commission, saying its draft recommendations on women rights were contrary to Islamic faith. Hefazat-e-Islam, a platform of mainly teachers and students of non-government or "kawmi" madrassa or religious seminaries and considered as an influential pressure group, staged the rally at Dhaka's Suhrawardy Udyan denouncing proposed recommendations for ensuring equal rights for Muslim women, including ones related to property. This is one of their biggest public shows of strength in years as religious activism surged in Bangladesh following the ouster of deposed prime minister Sheikh Hasina's Awami League regime last year. *—PTI*

Labour rides anti-Trump wave to win Aus

Australian Prime Minister makes a stunning comeback in a landslide win

Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese speaks during a visit to Morayfield Medicare Urgent Care Clinic near Brisbane **PHOTO: PTI**

MELBOURNE, 3 MAY

As Labour party is set to a sweeping win in Australia, Prime Minister Anthony Albanese said the Australians had voted to uphold Australian values.

"Today, the Australian people have voted for Australian values — for fairness, aspiration and opportunity for all," Albanese told cheering supporters at Sydney's Canterbury-Hurlstone Park RSL Club.

"Australians have chosen to face global challenges the Australian way, looking after each other while building for the future." he said.

"We have been defined by our opponents in this election, which is not a true story of who we are," he added.

> **We've seen the attempt to run American-style politics here of division and pitting Australians against each other and I think that's not the Australian way**
>
> -Anthony Albanese, Australian Prime Minister

Opposition leader Peter Dutton who lost his parliamentary seat in a shocking defeat, said, "We didn't do well enough during this campaign, that much is obvious tonight, and I accept full responsibility for that."

"Earlier on, I called the prime minister to congratulate him on his success tonight. It's an historic occasion for the Labour Party and we recognise that," he added.

The Australian Electoral Commission's projections gave Albanese's ruling centre-left Labour Party 70 seats and the conservative opposition coalition 24 seats in the 150-seat House of Representatives, the lower chamber where parties need a majority to form governments.

The ruling centre-left Labour Party has branded the opposition leader "DOGE-y Dutton" and accused his party of mimicking US President Donald Trump and his Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE).

Dutton was seen as an Australian version of US Presdident Donald Trump and this may have been to his disadvantage.

"We've seen the attempt to run American-style politics here of division and pitting Australians against each other and I think that's not the Australian way," Albanese said noting that his government had improved relations with China, which removed a series of trade barriers that had cost Australian exporters USD 13 billion. *– Agencies*

Trump AI pic as Pope: Spoof or vanity

WASHINGTON/NEW YORK, 3 MAY

US President Donald Trump has posted a seemingly AI generated photo of himself in papal attire without any comments on his social media and shared the picture from the White House's social media handle, fuelling both backlash, praise and some calling it humorous.

A social media user labelled it 'Make Vatican great Again' while another called it "cosplaying as the next Pope". The post comes even as the Vatican gets ready to choose the next Pope and days after Trump had joked last week that he would be his own "number one choice" for the next pope.

Reacting to the image posted on the White House's X account, Lepus (@LepusNox) was quick to point out how it was neither funny nor respectful. "As President of the United States, posting a picture of himself as Pope a few days after the Pope's death is neither funny, nor does it present statesmanship and respectful behaviour. Rather, it shows the boundless arrogance and childish behaviour of a man who believes he is above everything, can get away with anything and is the head of everyone."

Trump shared the AI generated picture of him dressed like the Pope both on his Truth social platform and POTUS handle. **PHOTO: X**

The newsportal quoted comedian Terrance K Williams's post on X, which said: "Pope Trump... Lol our President just posted this. He's trolling because he knows the media is going to flip out. Love it Actually I love the sound of King Trump, the first of his name."

Earlier on 29 April, Trump when asked about his choice would be of the next Pope he said, "I have no preference," but added: "I must say, we have a cardinal that happens to be out of a place called New York who's very good, so we'll see what happens."

MILITARY DAY PARADE ON TRUMP'S BIRTHDAY

Meanwhile, the Army on Friday confirmed there will be a military parade on President Donald Trump's birthday on 14 June, as part of the celebrations around the service's 250th birthday. Plans for the pricey parade,comes amidst several firings and spending cuts by the Trump administration's Department of Government efficiency run by Elon Musk. About 6,600 soldiers are to march from Arlington, Virginia, to the National Mall along with 150 vehicles and 50 helicopters. Officials say the parade which includes fireworks in the day long festival is likely to cost millions of dollars. *—PTI*

US-Saudi defence deal gets 1st okay before Trump visit

DUBAI, 3 MAY

The United States has given initial approval to sell $3.5 billion worth of air-to-air missiles for Saudi Arabia's fighter jets, the latest proposed arms deal for the region ahead of President Donald Trump's planned trip to the region later this month.

The sale, announced early Saturday, likely will be one of several heralded by Trump on his visit to the kingdom. Saudi Arabia has already said it wants to invest $600 billion in the United States over the next four years, likely as a way to woo Trump to again pick the kingdom for his first formal trip as president. Trump travelled to Italy briefly for Pope Francis' funeral.

"This proposed sale will support the foreign policy goals and national security objectives of the United States by improving the security of a partner country that contributes to political stability and economic progress in the Gulf Region," the US Defence Security Cooperation Agency said in a statement.

The arms sale involves 1,000 AIM-120C-8 advanced medium range air-to-air missiles, guidance sections and other technical support. The missiles will be built by RTX Corp of Tucson, Ariz.

The proposed sale now goes to the US Congress. Lawmakers typically weigh in on such sales and, in some cases, can block them. *—PTI*

S'pore votes amid US-China tensions

SINGAPORE, 3 MAY

A resident votes at a polling station during election in Singapore on Saturday **PHOTO: PTI**

Singaporeans headed to the polls on Saturday in a closely watched general election, as the ruling People's Action Party (PAP) seeks a renewed mandate against the backdrop of mounting global economic uncertainty driven by US tariffs on China — the city-state's largest trading partner.

By noon, around 48 per cent of over 2.63 million registered voters had cast their ballots. Some voters braved heavy rains early morning to cast their votes, with a few queuing up more than an hour before polling stations opened at 8 am.

As many as 206 candidates from 11 parties, including two independents, are vying for 92 seats across 32 constituencies.

Cost of living, housing, and the rising number of foreign workers are the key election issues. "Singapore is in the cross road between US and China trade war," a diplomatic source said,

Prime Minister Lawrence Wong, completing nearly a year in office, is seeking a fresh mandate for PAP, which has governed the city-state since Independence and steered its development into a global financial hub. *—PTI*

MAN BITTEN BY SNAKE HUNDREDS OF TIMES HELPS CREATE NEW ANTI-VENOM

NEW DELHI, 3 MAY

Scientists have developed what could be the most broadly effective antivenom to date, using blood from a man who built 'hyper immunity' by getting bitten by snakes hundreds of times over 18 years. Timothy Friede, a snake enthusiast from Wisconsin, self-immunised by injecting himself with venom and allowing snake bites from 16 deadly species, including cobras and mambas — enough venom to 'kill a horse', according to researchers.

This unique immune history enabled his body to produce antibodies capable of neutralising a wide range of snake toxins. Researchers from Centivax, a US vaccine company, extracted these antibodies to create a new antivenom. When tested on mice, it protected against venom from some of the world's deadliest snakes, While promising, the treatment is still in early stages. Researchers plan clinical trials in dogs as. human trials is several years away. *—PTI*

Hawaii hikes tax to fund climate change mitigation

Honululu, 3 May

Hawaii lawmakers on Friday passed a legislation that will increase the state's lodging tax to raise money for environmental protection and strengthening defences against climate change fueled natural disasters. Officials estimate the tax will generate nearly USD 100 million/ year for disaster prevention and management.- PTI

SpaceX employees to vote on Starbase HQ in Texas

McAllen, 3 May

Voters, most of whom are Space X employees are likely to vote on Saturday for the South Texas home of Elon Musk's SpaceX rocket company to become an official city known as Starbase, even amidst local concerns, fulfilling the billionaire's dream of a galactic dateline for project to blast astronauts to Mars. - PTI

Europena Commission **PHOTO: X**

EU endorses Ukraine-US deal amid Russian strikes

BRUSSELS, 3 MAY

The European Commission has welcomed the signing of a fossil fuel agreement between the United States and Ukraine, stating that the deal complies with EU law and does not hinder Ukraine's potential EU accession. Paula Pinho, a spokesperson for the Commission, affirmed on Friday that the EU understood Ukraine's interest in ensuring that the agreement would not interfere with its EU membership aspirations. She emphasised that the European Commission has been in close contact with Ukrainian counterparts on this matter.

Meanwhile, in Kharkiv, Ukraine's second-largest city, a Russian drone strike wounded 47 people, with significant damage to residential buildings, civilian infrastructure, and vehicles. Kharkiv Mayor Ihor Terekhov confirmed that drones hit 12 locations late on Friday. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy has called for stronger and more decisive support from Ukraine's allies, urging the West to take more urgent action in strengthening air defences.

In response, Ukraine's Air Force reported that it had intercepted 77 of the 183 drones launched by Russia, with a further 73 likely jammed electronically. Russian air defences claimed to have destroyed 170 Ukrainian drones overnight. Both nations continue to strike across the border regions. *—ANI*

Kim Moon Soo enters S Korea poll race

SEOUL, 3 MAY

Former Labour Minister Kim Moon Soo secured the presidential nomination of South Korea's main conservative party, facing a tough challenge against liberal frontrunner Lee Jae-myung in the June 3 election. Kim, 73, won 56.5 per cent of the vote in a party primary that concluded on Saturday, defeating his sole rival, Han Dong-hun. Other contenders were eliminated in earlier rounds.

In his victory speech, Kim vowed to form alliances with other conservative forces, such as former Prime Minister Han Duck-soo, to prevent a split in the conservative vote and strengthen his chances against Lee. "I'll form a strong alliance with anyone to prevent a rule by Lee Jae-myung and his Democratic Party," Kim said.

Kim Moon Soo **PHOTO: PTI**

Kim, a former governor of Gyeonggi province and a three-term National Assembly member, was once a pro-democracy and labour activist before joining a conservative party in the 1990s. He has opposed the impeachment of President Yoon Suk Yeol, who was removed from office in early April following the controversial imposition of martial law in December.

Lee, the leading contender, faces five criminal trials related to corruption, which could affect his campaign. A recent Supreme Court ruling ordered a new trial on election law charges, adding further uncertainty to his candidacy. *—PTI*

Gaza rejects Israeli aid proposal

TEL AVIV, 3 MAY

Israel has blocked aid into Gaza for two months, insisting food, fuel, water, and medicine will not enter until it ensures Hamas and other militants cannot divert supplies. However, UN agencies and aid groups say Israel's proposed system—centred around five military-controlled distribution hubs—could violate international law by effectively forcing Palestinians to relocate in order to access essentials.

Documents obtained by AP reveal that aid organisations fear these hubs, concentrated south of the Netzarim Corridor, would restrict movement, risk civilian safety, and leave over two million Gazans with inadequate access. Instead of supporting humanitarian delivery, aid officials say Israel's plan would serve military and political aims, breaching principles of impartiality and independence.

Israeli forces raid West Bank **PHOTO: X**

The proposals, not yet published by Israel, have triggered a standstill in talks. Most NGOs have indicated they would refuse to operate under such a system. The UN and aid groups insist Israel must facilitate, not obstruct, humanitarian operations and warn it could bear legal responsibility if Gaza's humanitarian crisis worsens under the changes. *—PTI*

Prince Harry wants to reconcile with family after ruling

LONDON, 3 MAY

Prince Harry has expressed a desire to reconcile with his family after losing a legal battle over his publicly funded police protection in the UK. Speaking to the BBC, Harry said, "I don't know how much longer my father has," referring to King Charles III, who is undergoing cancer treatment. He added that the security dispute had caused a breakdown in communication with his father.

The Court of Appeal upheld the government's 2020 decision to remove Harry's automatic police protection after he stepped back from royal duties and moved to the US. Harry argued the move endangered him and his family, citing threats including an Al-Qaeda mention and a paparazzi chase in New York. Buckingham Palace officials, matter had been thoroughly reviewed by the courts. *—PTI*

PLAY YOUR CARDINALS RIGHT

Betting markets wagers on who will be elected next Pope

ROME, 3 MAY

Next week's conclave to elect the successor to Pope Francis as leader of the world's 1.4 billion Catholics is a solemn affair steeped in centuries-old traditions.

But far from the Sistine Chapel where cloistered cardinals will cast votes, people are placing bets on who will be chosen as the next pope. From cash bets on websites to online games modelled after fantasy football leagues and casual wagers among friends and families, the popularity of guessing and gambling on the future of the papacy is increasing worldwide.

It's even topped the Europa League soccer tournament and Formula One drivers' championship, said Sam Eaton, UK manager for Oddschecker, a leading online platform.

"There's a huge level of interest globally," he said. "I don't think we've had a market like this where we've had so many countries interested in seeing odds."

Even as the Vatican prepares to elect the new Pope at the conclave starting on Wednesday betting markets are abuzz **PHOTO: PTI**

Hundreds of thousands of people from some 140 countries have visited Oddschecker to review each cardinal's chances of becoming the next pope, Eaton said adding UK Ireland and US show high interest.

"Since April 21, we've taken thousands of bets, and it's the busiest of all our non-sports betting markets," said Lee Phelps, a spokesman for William Hill, one of the UK's biggest bookmakers adding the frenzy will increase as the cardinals begin the process on Wednesday.

Meanwhile, Vatican workers, have installed the simple stove in the Sistine Chapel where ballots will be burned. On Friday, fire crews attached chimney from which smoke signals will indicate whether a pope has been elected. *—PTI*

PHOTO: airth.in

IIT-Bombay develops new AC filtration tech for AIRTH

NEW DELHI, 3 MAY

Air purification startup, AIRTH, announced successful testing of AC filtration technology, Filtrix that can be applied in any air conditioner. The technology, developed by the Indian Institute of Technology Bombay, captures pollutants, allergens and pathogens. Tests revealed 13 per cent lower power consumption compared to standard AC ratings and a negligible drop of 4 per cent in cooling capacity after three months of usage. The technology is also compatible and safe with AC systems. "Our technology protects your lungs and AC at a fraction of the cost of expensive air purifiers. It provides five times better air purification efficiency than those with in-built air purifiers "said Ravi Kaushik, AIRTH's CEO and founder. *—PTI*

ICAI to help Sebi in tackling financial frauds

NEW DELHI, 3 MAY

Chartered accountants' apex body ICAI will be preparing a research paper to help markets watchdog Sebi in dealing with financial frauds. ICAI President Charanjot Singh Nanda on Saturday said the institute will set up a working group and hold discussions with Sebi to finalise the various aspects that will be looked into with respect to tackling financial frauds. The working group will submit a research paper to the Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi), Nanda told PTI. Nanda had a meeting with Sebi Chairman Tuhin Kanta Pandey on Friday. In recent years, there has been increased investments in capital market, including from retail investors. *—PTI*

Zydus Lifesciences completes 25 yrs of listing on NSE

MUMBAI, 3 MAY

To commemorate the 25th year of the listing of Zydus Lifesciences Ltd on the National Stock Exchange of India (NSE), a bell ringing ceremony was organized at BKC, Mumbai on 2 May 2025. On this occasion, senior management of Zydus and other senior executives were present. Over the last 24 years, the Company's sales has grown from Rs. 478 crores to Rs. 19,022 crores, a CAGR of 17 per cent, operating profit has grown from Rs. 70 crores to Rs. 5,384 crores a CAGR of 20 per cent, and profits after tax has grown from Rs. 38 crores to Rs. 3,860 crores at CAGR of 21 per cent. *—PTI*

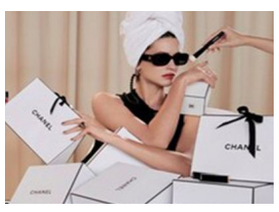


PHOTO:ANI

Chanel Fragrance and Beauty launches on Nykaa

MUMBAI, 3 MAY

Chanel announces the launch of its Fragrance & Beauty products on Nykaa, India's leading beauty and lifestyle destination digital-first consumer tech company, serving over 40 million customers through its online platforms and 221+ offline beauty destinations. Chanel Fragrance & Beauty products will be available through a select offering of Nykaa Luxe stores spread across the country and online via Nykaa's app and website. Chanel s presence on Nykaa is designed with the unique style of the House that creates a luxurious and delightful space where clients can enjoy shopping while discovering about the brand's heritage, as well as new, innovative product ranges. CHANEL is committed to continuously advancing its luxury offline shopping experience to online shoppers. *—PTI*

Illicit trade costs Pakistan Rs 3.4 trillion: Report

Nearly 30% loss from misuse of the Afghan trade facility

ISLAMABAD, 3 MAY

From smuggled petroleum and counterfeit pharmaceuticals to non-tax-paid cigarettes and under-invoiced consumer goods, illicit trade has entrenched itself across key sectors *PHOTO: PTI*

Pakistan is losing Rs 3.4 trillion, including a nearly 30 per cent loss because of misuse of the Afghan Transit Trade facility due to illicit trade, according to a report.

The losses estimated by the Policy Research Institute of Market Economy (PRIME) in its report titled "Combatting Illicit Trade in Pakistan" are equal to 26 per cent of this fiscal year's annual tax target, reported The Express Tribune newspaper.

The report estimates an annual tax revenue loss of Rs 3.4 trillion on account of an estimated USD 123 billion informal economy, according to the report released on Thursday.

It underlined that the illicit trade has emerged as a critical challenge for Pakistan's economy, undermining formal businesses, eroding government revenues, and jeopardising consumer safety.

From smuggled petroleum and counterfeit pharmaceuticals to non-tax-paid cigarettes and under-invoiced consumer goods, illicit trade has entrenched itself across key sectors, it added.

The country's intelligence and investigation agencies have recently pointed fingers towards the customs officials facilitating the smuggling and under-invoicing.

The estimated revenue loss from Afghanistan Transit Trade is Rs 1 trillion, according to the report.

After making stringent conditions to curb smuggling under the transit trade, Pakistan last month relaxed the conditions by allowing the import of Afghanistan-bound goods against insurance guarantees.

PRIME said that the smuggling of oil was causing Rs 270 billion in losses.

The report has estimated the volume of smuggled Iranian oil at 2.8 billion litres.

The government charges Rs 16 per litre customs duty and a petroleum development levy of Rs 78 per litre, a reason for smugglers to shift towards smuggled oil to make higher profits.

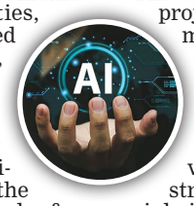
While commenting on size of the informal economy, the report stated that independent experts consider the size of the informal economy to be one-third of the formal economy. *—PTI*

Creatorland initiative is projected to draw investments of up to Rs 10,000 cr over the next six years *PHOTO: X*

AP inks Rs 10K cr deal to build AI-powered city

AMARAVATI, 3 MAY

The Andhra Pradesh government has signed a groundbreaking agreement at the WAVES Summit in Mumbai to establish a Transmedia Entertainment City, titled Creatorland, in the state. This ambitious project will encompass theme parks, gaming zones, and global cinema co-production facilities, with objectives centred around job creation, skill development, tourism, and digital innovation.



Prime Minister Narendra Modi officially inaugurated the World Audio Visual & Entertainment Summit, which runs from 1 to 4 May. As part of the summit, Andhra Pradesh entered into a memorandum of understanding with CreativeLand Asia to bring Creatorland to fruition.

Andhra Pradesh's Tourism Minister K Durgesh hailed the partnership, describing it as a significant milestone in the state's pursuit of promoting film and entertainment tourism. "This MoU is more than just an infrastructure project; it is an unwavering commitment to fostering an enabling ecosystem for talent, innovation, and tourism," he stated in a press release.

The Creatorland initiative is projected to draw investments of up to Rs 10,000 crore over the next six years. The financial backing will be allocated to the development of a cutting-edge virtual studio complex strengthened by artificial intelligence (AI) and other advanced technologies.

Additionally, the entertainment hub is expected to create numerous employment and skill development opportunities for young people from Andhra Pradesh and beyond, particularly in creative and tech sectors. *—PTI*

Govt warns industry against transshipment to US

NEW DELHI, 3 MAY

Transshipment refers to the process of importing products from one country and then exporting to another *PHOTO: FREEPIK*

The Commerce Ministry has cautioned the domestic industry to strictly follow the US "rules of origin" norms while exporting goods to America, as re-routing products from high-tariff countries without substantial value addition could be classified as transshipment and attract higher duties, an official said.

The Ministry has also assured the industry that all efforts would be made to codify the value addition norms to provide certainty and clarity to exporters, the official said.

The issue was deliberated at length during a stakeholder consultation on India-US trade ties, convened by the ministry on 2 May here. The stakeholder consultation was chaired by Special Secretary in the Ministry Rajesh Agrawal. He is also India's Chief Negotiator for the India-US bilateral trade agreement (BTA).

Transshipment refers to the process of importing products from one country and then exporting to another, usually without significant processing or value addition.

In a meeting with exporters last month, Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal cautioned domestic exporters that they should not use India as a destination for re-routing goods originating from high-tariff countries like China to the US.

America has imposed 145 per cent tariffs on Chinese goods.

Buying goods from countries facing high US import duty and then sending those to America may invite action from the American authorities which could include blacklisting of firms as such exports violate US rules of origin norms.

The official said that during the consultation, an overview on the "rules of origin" followed by the US was provided. *—PTI*

RBI IMPOSES PENALTIES ON 5 LENDERS

MUMBAI, 3 MAY

The Reserve Bank on Friday said it has imposed penalties on five lenders, including ICICI Bank, Bank of Baroda, and Axis Bank, over deficiencies in certain regulatory compliances.

Penalty of Rs 97.80 lakh has been imposed on ICICI Bank for non-compliance with certain directions issued by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) on "Cyber Security Framework in Banks", "Know Your Customer (KYC)", and "Credit Card and Debit Card -- Issuance and Conduct".

Penalty of Rs 61.40 lakh on Bank of Baroda, Rs 31.8 lakh on IDBI Bank Ltd, Rs 31.80 lakh on Bank of Maharashtra and Rs 29.60 lakh on Axis bank was imposed by RBI. *—PTI*

SBI Q4 profit falls by 10% to Rs 18,643 cr

NEW DELHI, 3 MAY

State Bank of India (SBI) on Saturday reported 10 per cent fall in standalone net profit at Rs 18,643 crore for the fourth quarter ended March 2025.

The country's biggest lender had earned a profit of Rs 20,698 crore in the January-March period of 2023-24.

Total income increased to Rs 1,43,876 crore in March quarter from Rs 1,28,412 crore in the same period a year ago, SBI said in a regulatory filing.

During the quarter, the bank earned an interest income of Rs 1,19,666 crore as against Rs 1,11,043 crore a year ago.

The bank saw an improvement in asset quality, with gross non-performing assets (NPAs) declining to 1.82 per cent of the total advances in the fourth quarter from 2.24 per cent as at March-end 2024.

On a consolidated basis, SBI's net profit in the quarter fell 8 per cent to Rs 19,600 crore as against Rs 21,384 crore in the same period a year ago. Total income, however, increased to Rs 1,79,562 crore from Rs 1,64,914 crore.

For entire financial year 2024-25, the bank reported 16 per cent increase in profit on a standalone basis at Rs 70,901 crore as against Rs 61,077 crore in the previous year. *—PTI*

GENSOL, BLUSMART FIN REVEIW TO END IN 6 MONTHS: ICAI

NEW DELHI, 3 MAY

The Institute of Chartered Accountants of India will complete the review of the financial statements of crisis-hit Gensol Engineering Ltd and BluSmart Mobility in six months.

ICAI's Financial Reporting Review Board (FRRB) is reviewing the financial statements of the two companies for 2023-24.

FRRB reviews financial statements of companies to assess compliance with guidance notes and standards of accounting and auditing, schedules of the Companies Act, 2013 and Reserve Bank of India's master directions among others. *—PTI*

Sebi eases measures for REITs and InvITs

NEW DELHI, 3 MAY

Markets regulator Sebi on Friday proposed alignment of valuation report timelines with financial results for real estate investment trusts (REITs) and infrastructure investment trusts (InvITs).

These proposals are aimed at promoting ease of doing business, Sebi said in its consultation paper.

Under the present rule, REITs and InvITs are required to get their assets valued regularly and submit these valuation reports to stock exchanges and unitholders.

However, currently, the timelines for conducting valuations, submitting valuation reports, and filing financial results are not aligned, causing inefficiencies.

Accordingly, Sebi has proposed that annual valuation reports should be submitted within 60 days from the financial year-end -- matching the timeline for annual financial results.

It suggested that half-yearly or quarterly valuation reports should be submitted within 45 days, aligning with quarterly financial result timelines.

The regulator proposed that quarterly valuations for high-debt InvITs should also follow the 45-day deadline and proposed to remove the 15-day separate submission rule to reduce redundancy.

Sebi has sought feedback on whether the trading lot and minimum investment amount should be aligned for consistency and investor convenience. *—PTI*

Under the present rule, REITs and InvITs are required to get their assets valued regularly and submit these valuation reports to stock exchanges and unitholders *PHOTO: PTI*

India's participation at World Expo to boost trade

NEW DELHI, 3 MAY

The participation of India at the World Expo 2025 in Osaka is expected to help boost trade and tourism as India pavilion is showcasing the country's cultural richness and commercial successes.

In 2024, the government had earmarked Rs 400 crore for participation in the World Expo 2025 in Osaka, Japan.

The six months long expo began on 13 April.

A World Expo is an event that brings together people and innovations from around the world in an effort to address issues facing humankind on a global scale. *—PTI*

20,000 JOBS CREATED

Netflix generated $2B in India: CEO

MUMBAI, 3 MAY

Globally three billion hours of Indian content was watched last year, with at least one Indian title in global top 10 every week *PHOTO: X NETFLIX*

Netflix created USD 2 billion of economic impact from its Indian productions, the streaming plaftorm's co-CEO Ted Sarandos said on Saturday.

At the inaugural World Audio Visual and Entertainment Summit (WAVES), held at the Jio Convention Centre here, Sarandos said the company created 20,000 cast and crew jobs from its projects in the country.

"Since 2021 through 2024, especially after COVID, when things got back to normal, we've invested in India in a way that has created USD 2 billion of economic impact from our productions, over 20,000 cast and crew jobs from our productions in India," Sarandos said.

He noted that globally three billion hours of Indian content was watched last year, with at least one Indian title in the global top 10 every week.

"In those productions, we have 150 original films and series that were filmed in 100 different towns and cities in India," he added.

Sarandos was speaking at the session "Streaming the New India: Culture, Connectivity & Creative Capital", moderated by Bollywood star Saif Ali Khan, who headlined Netflix's first Indian original series "We've been operating in India now for nine years. But we took our big swing seven years ago with 'Sacred Games'...And I knew that India would be a very important part of our journey.

He said India has a great cinema culture as people love to watch films and then talk about them. *—PTI*

Musk to revive Tesla in Europe after sales plunge

NEW YORK, 3 MAY

Tesla sales plunged by more than half last month in several European countries in a sign that Elon Musk could struggle to revive the company.

Tesla sales collapsed in April by more than two-thirds from a year earlier in Sweden, the Netherlands and Denmark, according to auto groups and government.

Sales dropped by 59 per cent and 38 per cent in France and Norway respectively.

Sales in Sweden fell by 81 per cent, followed by 74 per cent in the Netherlands and 67 per cent in Denmark.

Nevertheless, Italy registered a 3 per cent gain in sales.

Sales in Germany plunged 62 per cent in 2025 after Musk claimed that the country was lost if its voters didn't vote for a candidate widely derided for her extreme views.

Tesla's aging model lineup and new offerings from rival electric vehicles makers, such as China BYD also suppressed sales.

Tesla shut down factories for several weeks this year while upgrading its best selling sport utility vehicle, pinching supply. The company is also waiting for European regulators to approve its cars' partial self-driving features.

The stock has been rising since that announcement. Profits in the first quarter fell by 71 per cent. *—PTI*

PHOTO: PTI

Mandaviya inaugurates Khelo India facility in AP

NEW DELHI, 3 MAY

Union Sports Minister Mansukh Mandaviya on Saturday inaugurated a multi-purpose indoor sports hall in Kamle district, reiterating the Centre's commitment to inclusive sports development in remote regions. Funded under the Khelo India initiative at a cost of 8 crore, the modern facility will support grassroots-level training in sports such as boxing, badminton, judo, wushu, karate, taekwondo, weightlifting, table tennis, and volleyball. Mandaviya said the hall will help unlock the region's sporting potential and provide youth with opportunities to compete nationally and internationally. *—PTI*

Ryu leads by two at LPGA's Black Desert Championship

IVINS, 3 MAY

Haeran Ryu carded a 5-under 67 on Friday to take a two-shot lead at the LPGA Black Desert Championship, finishing at 14-under 130. Despite a slow start, the South Korean rebounded with a birdie on the fifth and capped her round with a hybrid to five feet for eagle on the par-5 ninth. Ryu has missed just two fairways and three greens over 36 holes at the Tom Weiskopf-designed course, where black lava rock creates a deceptive visual challenge. She leads fellow Korean Somi Lee, who posted a bogey-free 66 for a second straight day. Germany's Esther Henseleit and 20-year-old Soo Bin Joo trail by three. Former Women's Open champion Hinako Shibuno surged with a 65, while top Americans Kristen Gillman and Andrea Lee are six shots back. *—PTI*

Sanson's goal sends Nice into Champions League

NICE, 3 MAY

Morgan Sanson continued his impressive form with a goal to secure a 1-0 win for Nice over Reims in Ligue 1 on Friday, extending their winning streak to three matches. Just 15 minutes into the game, a left-wing cross was only partially cleared, and Sanson pounced to fire the ball into an empty net. The former Aston Villa striker, who has struggled with injury this season, now has three goals in his last two games, including a brace in Nice's shock 3-1 win at PSG last week. The victory lifted Nice into third place, overtaking Lille and Monaco. Reims remains 13th in the standings. Meanwhile, Paris FC earned promotion to Ligue 1 for the first time in 35 years. *—PTI*

Late Torino penalty denies Venezia win in relegation battle

TURIN, 3 MAY

Venezia's hopes of climbing out of Serie A's relegation zone were dashed after a late penalty from Nikola Vlaši earned Torino a 1-1 draw on Friday. Kike Pérez scored his first Serie A goal in the 35th minute, finishing smartly between two defenders after Venezia had an earlier goal disallowed for offside. The visitors looked on course for a crucial victory until Torino were awarded a penalty in the 77th minute, which Vlaši calmly converted. The result leaves Venezia third from bottom, one point above Empoli and one behind Lecce, both of whom have a game in hand. A first away win since February 2022 would have lifted them out of the drop zone. Torino remain 10th. *—PTI*

Pant struggles as PBKS face LSG

Pant has managed just 110 runs in 10 matches

DHARAMSALA, 3 MAY

As the IPL enters its decisive phase, Punjab Kings (PBKS) and Lucknow Super Giants (LSG) clash in a pivotal mid-table battle on Sunday, with both sides seeking momentum. The contest pits in-form PBKS captain Shreyas Iyer against under-pressure LSG skipper Rishabh Pant, whose poor run with the bat has put his team in a must-win scenario.

PBKS currently sit fourth with 13 points from 10 games, while LSG are sixth on 10 points. Iyer, signed for Rs 26.75 crore after being released by KKR, has impressed with his leadership and consistency, notching up four half-centuries this season. His adaptability, especially against the short ball, has strengthened PBKS's top order.

In contrast, Pant's struggles have continued. The wicketkeeper-batter has managed just 110 runs in 10 matches, with six single-digit scores and only one notable innings, a 63 against Chennai Super Kings. LSG's reliance on big hitters like Mitchell Marsh (344 runs), Aiden Markram (326), and Nicholas Pooran (377) has made Pant's form even more concerning.

PBKS will miss the services of all-rounder Glenn Maxwell, ruled out due to a fractured finger. Iyer may turn to Azmatullah Omarzai, Aaron Hardie, or Xavier Bartlett as a replacement. The batting lineup remains robust, with Prabhsimran Singh, who recently became the first uncapped IPL player to surpass 1,100 runs, leading the charge alongside Priyansh Arya, Nehal Wadhera, and Shashank Singh.

PBKS's bowling looks equally promising, bolstered by Yuzvendra Chahal's return to form. The leg-spinner claimed a hat-trick in their last win against CSK, relying on instinct and variation.

LSG, coming off a week-long break, will hope to reset after a 54-run loss to Mumbai Indians. The return of pacer Mayank Yadav, who claimed two wickets on his comeback, adds pace to their attack despite him operating below his earlier 150+ kmph speeds. Avesh Khan's consistency will also be crucial. *—PTI*

KKR eyes win to stay in playoff hunt

KKR must win all 4 games left for 17 points

KOLKATA, 3 MAY

Defending champions Kolkata Knight Riders (KKR) will look to revive their faltering home form and keep playoff hopes alive when they face Rajasthan Royals (RR) at Eden Gardens on Sunday.

With four games left, KKR must win all to reach 17 points, likely enough to secure a top-four spot without relying on other results. Their run-in includes two home games, against RR and Chennai Super Kings, before away fixtures against Sunrisers Hyderabad and Royal Challengers Bengaluru.

Despite RR's elimination following a heavy 100-run loss to Mumbai Indians, they pose a threat with nothing to lose. KKR, however, have been poor at Eden this season, managing just one win from five home games. Their spin attack has failed to adapt to the surface, while key batters like Rinku Singh (169 runs) and Quinton de Kock (143 runs) have underperformed.

Big-money signing and vice-captain Venkatesh Iyer has been especially disappointing, managing just 142 runs in 10 games. Skipper Ajinkya Rahane, KKR's most reliable batter this season, is recovering from a hand injury but hopes to play.

KKR's recent 14-run win over Delhi Capitals ended a three-match winless streak, with Sunil Narine starring in all departments. His all-round brilliance will again be crucial.

For RR, the campaign has unravelled, with just one win in their last seven matches. Injuries to Sanju Samson and the exit of Jos Buttler have left their batting exposed. Despite a sensational century by 14-year-old Vaibhav Suryavanshi, RR remain overly reliant on individual brilliance. *—PTI*

Unadkat blames bowling for SRH's struggles

Ahmedabad, 3 May

India pacer Jaydev Unadkat has attributed Sunrisers Hyderabad's (SRH) disappointing IPL season to inconsistent bowling and changing pitch conditions. After a 38-run loss to Gujarat Titans on Friday, SRH are all but out of playoff contention with just three wins from 10 matches. Unadkat noted a lack of bowling partnerships, saying, "When two bowlers are doing well, the other three aren't in sync, which creates pressure." He added that while planning and training have been solid, execution on the field has faltered. SRH, who posted record totals last season, have struggled to replicate that form.

Women's tri-series: In-form India face resurgent Lanka

COLOMBO, 3 MAY

Unbeaten so far, India will look to maintain their dominant run in the women's tri-nation ODI series when they face a rejuvenated Sri Lanka on Sunday. Harmanpreet Kaur's side leads the points table with two comprehensive wins over Sri Lanka and South Africa.

India defeated the hosts in the tournament opener, thanks to standout bowling from spinners Sneh Rana and Shree Charani, followed by a steady chase led by openers Pratika Rawal and Smriti Mandhana. Against South Africa, strong contributions from the top order and a late surge from Kaur and Jemimah Rodrigues helped post a competitive total. Rana's game-changing three-wicket over and sharp fielding ensured India's eighth straight ODI win.

However, pacers Kashvee Gautam and Arundhati Reddy were expensive and will look to adapt better to the slower Colombo track.

Sri Lanka bounced back with a morale-boosting five-wicket win over South Africa. A record 128-run fourth-wicket stand between Harshitha Samarawickrama and Kavisha Dilhari anchored their chase, while bowlers Malki Madara and debutant Dewmi Vihanga shared seven wickets.

Still, the form of captain Chamari Athapaththu remains a concern, placing added responsibility on young talents like Vishmi Gunaratne to steady the top order.

India will look to seal a spot in the final, while Sri Lanka must win to stay in the hunt. *—PTI*

India defeated the hosts in the tournament opener, thanks to standout bowling from spinners **PHOTO: X @SPORTSGRAMINDIA**

Antonelli is F1's youngest driver

Kimi Antonelli **PHOTO: X @CFMAGINDIA**

MIAMI GARDENS, 3 MAY

Mercedes rookie Kimi Antonelli made Formula 1 history on Friday by becoming the youngest pole-winner ever, securing the top spot for Saturday's sprint race at the Miami Grand Prix. The 18-year-old Italian, in his debut F1 season replacing Lewis Hamilton, edged McLaren's Oscar Piastri by just 0.045 seconds.

"I am feeling over the moon, I did not expect this," said Antonelli. "It was a very intense qualifying. I felt good from the morning and very confident heading into it. I'm really happy to get my first pole – starting on the front row will be special."

This marks the first time since 2009 that an Italian driver has secured any F1 pole position.

Piastri, the current championship leader, will start second, while his McLaren teammate Lando Norris, who sits second in the standings, qualified third. Red Bull's Max Verstappen, fresh off the birth of his first child with partner Kelly Piquet, qualified fourth after missing Thursday's media activities.

Mercedes' George Russell will start fifth, followed by Ferrari's Charles Leclerc and Lewis Hamilton. Williams' Alex Albon qualified eighth, ahead of Racing Bulls rookie Isack Hadjar and Aston Martin's Fernando Alonso.

Saturday's sprint will be the second of the season and a key test for Antonelli as he seeks to convert a historic pole into early career glory. *—PTI*

KKR vs RR

Match starts at **3.30 pm IST**

HEAD TO HEAD

PLAYED:	31
KKR won:	15
RR Won:	14

PBKS vs LSG

Match starts at **7.30 pm IST**

HEAD TO HEAD

PLAYED:	5
PBKS won:	3
LSG won:	2

Injured Ruud reaches Madrid Open final

MADRID, 3 MAY

Casper Ruud overcame a rib injury with the help of painkillers to defeat Francisco Cerundolo 6-4, 7-5 and reach the Madrid Open final on Friday. The 15th-ranked Norwegian will face Britain's Jack Draper, who eased past Lorenzo Musetti 6-3, 7-6 (4) to book his third final of the year.

Ruud received treatment just three games into the match and revealed he had considered retiring due to the pain. "I wasn't sure I was going to be able to finish," he said. "It got better after some painkillers — not ideal, but sometimes necessary."

Saving 15 of 18 break points, Ruud snapped a two-match losing streak against Cerundolo, who had upset top seed Alexander Zverev earlier in the tournament. The win secures Ruud's return to the top 10, with a possible climb to No. 6 if he takes the title. A win would also make him the first Norwegian to claim an ATP 1000 trophy. Draper, meanwhile, continued his unbeaten streak against Musetti, improving their head-to-head to 4-0. "On clay, he's a different beast," said Draper. "So to get this win in the semis means so much."

Casper Ruud plays a clutch match to defeat Francisco Cerundolo 6-4, 7-5 and reach his first Madrid final **PHOTO: X @JOSEMORGADO**

- The sixth-ranked Brit hasn't dropped a set all tournament and will make his top-five debut after Madrid. He credited his mother's presence as a lucky charm this time.

The sixth-ranked Brit hasn't dropped a set all tournament and will make his top-five debut after Madrid.

He credited his mother's presence as a lucky charm this time, joking, "Seems like every match she's come to, I've been terrible... but tonight was a really good performance." In the women's final, Coco Gauff faces world No. 1 Aryna Sabalenka on Saturday. *—PTI*

AHEAD OF ENGLAND TOUR

Concerns raised over Shami's IPL struggles

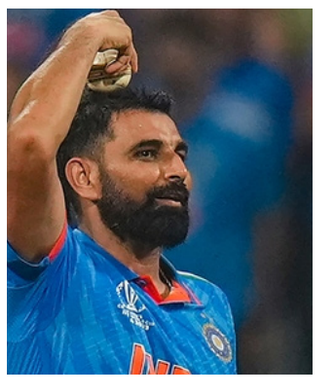
NEW DELHI, 3 MAY

Mohammed Shami's tough run in the IPL 2025 has raised alarm bells ahead of India's upcoming Test tour of England.

The seasoned pacer, who claimed the Purple Cap in 2023 with 28 wickets, has struggled to find his rhythm this season. His performance against Punjab Kings earlier this month was especially concerning, as he conceded 75 runs in four overs, just one shy of the record for the most expensive four-over spell in IPL history.

After missing IPL 2024 due to injury and undergoing foot surgery, Shami's return to form has been slower than expected. In his nine IPL matches this season, he has taken just six wickets with a worrying average of 56.17 and an economy rate of 11.23. In his most recent outing, against his former team Gujarat Titans, Shami bowled three expensive overs, conceding 48 runs without taking a wicket. Former cricketers Aakash Chopra and Danny Morrison have raised concerns about Shami's lack of consistency. Chopra noted that the pacer's once-precise line and length have been off this season, with too many loose deliveries. Morrison, pointing to Shami's age and recovery from surgery, suggested that the fast bowler might be struggling to fully regain his form.

While Shami has had solid performances in domestic cricket and limited-overs internationals since his injury, his recent form is worrying for his inclusion in India's Test squad. With the England tour just around the corner, questions remain over his readiness for red-ball cricket. *—ANI*

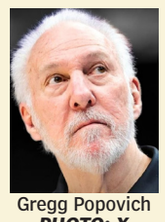


Mohammed Shami

GREGG POPOVICH RETIRES AFTER 29 SEASONS AS SPURS COACH

SAN ANTONIO, 3 MAY

Gregg Popovich, the NBA's all-time wins leader, has retired as head coach of the San Antonio Spurs after 29 seasons, ending one of the most storied coaching careers in basketball history. Popovich, 76, who will remain as team president, led the Spurs to five NBA championships and became the first coach in NBA history to reach 1,422 regular-season wins.



Gregg Popovich **PHOTO: X**

Popovich's remarkable career also includes 170 playoff victories, the most by any coach with one team. He coached six Hall of Famers, including Tim Duncan, Tony Parker, and Manu Ginobili, and led the US to a gold medal at the Tokyo Olympics.

His tenure, which began in 1996, spanned nearly three decades, with the Spurs winning titles in 1999, 2003, 2005, 2007, and 2014. *—PTI*